ROBERT ARTHUR LAWSON

ARCHITECT

1833 - 1902

W. J. Prior

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Master of Arts

at the University of Otago, Dunedin,

New Zealand

December 1990

ABSTRACT

ROBERT ARTHUR LAWSON 1833-1902

PROBLEM

Why did Lawson at the height of his professional career in 1889, decide to leave Dunedin and set up anew in Melbourne?

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

In attempting to trace the professional career of Lawson, the starting point is made with his personal diary written aboard the 'Tongataboo' when he sailed from London to Melbourne between the 13th of July and the 2nd of November 1854. Whilst he gives no specific reasons for emigrating to the other side of the world a comment written the first day aboard in London Docks perhaps gives a clue:

> "I seemed to have been thrown into that position in life which pointed to this, as the means of satisfying a nameless craving..."

Lawson was a pious young man but this did not prevent him from fully participating in shipboard life, and it was he who wrote a letter of thanks on behalf of the pasengers, to the captain and crew at the end of the voyage.

The first view of Melbourne on Wednesday 1 November 1854 seems to have been something of a disappointment although he was to spend the next seven years in Victoria. This period was not particularly fruitful in the architectural sense, but in 1861 a breakthrough came when Lawson, then 28 years of age won the design competition for the First Church of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

A considerable amount of information is available for the time Lawson spent in Dunedin, that is from 1862 until 1889, but other portions of his life remain relatively obscure. Such periods include his early years, his apprenticeship in Perth and Edinburgh, the time spent in Victorian goldfields, and latterly the years in Melbourne from 1889 to 1900. No family matters are mentioned throughout his long professional career and it is concluded that Lawson's professional life and his family affairs were separated into watertight compartments.

This thesis is not an attempt to cary out a detailed analysis of Lawson's architectural career but is a biographical sketch tracing various stages in his development as follows:

Early years
Architectural Influences
Victoria, Australia 1854-1861
Dunedin, New Zealand 1862-1889
Melbourne, Australia 1889-1900
Dunedin, New Zealand 1900-1902

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The 'Seacliff Lunatic Asylum', the most ambitious of all Lawson's projects led in 1888 to a Government Commission of Inquiry and censure of the architect. It is felt that this, rather than a downturn in the economyu led to the departure of Lawson for Melbourne in 1889. His architectural career was not over but it was in decline. Finally he spent the last years from 1900 to 1902 in Dunedin, his professional life at this stage effectively over.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are due to various sources for information kindly given.

Mr Johnathan Mané-Wheoki, Lecturer in Art History, University of Canterbury.

The Hocken Library and Archives, Dunedin.

Dunedin City Council; Archives and Architects Departments.

Alison Felstead, Editor, The British Architectural Biography, 1834-1914, Royal Institute of British Architects, London.

The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, Edinburgh.

Dr David M. Walker, Chief Inspector, Hisdtoric Buildings and Monuments, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Ms. Jean Kennedy, County Archivist, Norfolk Records Office, Norwich, England.

Mr Albert Olding, Kirkaldy, Fife, Scotland.

Perth and Kinross District Libraries, Perth, Scotland.

Ms. Gillian Wilson, District Museum Service, Cupar, Fife, Scotland.

The Otago Early Settlers Museum, Dunedin.

Mr Warwick Smith, Director, The Forrester Art Gallery, Oamaru.

Mr Robin Griffin, Archivist, Bank of New Zealand, Wellington.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Information obtained from newspaper files and publications is listed under footnotes, Bibliography, and Illustrations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The best introduction to Robert Arthur Lawson (Fig. 1) is through entries he made in a diary when in 1854 as a young man of twenty-one he was on board a sailing ship bound for Australia. The first such entry reads:

> 'On the 13th of July 1854 I found myself on board the ship TONGATABOO in London Docks ... I seemed to have been thrown into that position in life which pointed to this, as the means of satisfying a nameless craving ... - May God so direct my steps and regulate my mind ... [1]

No reason is given for the decision made to leave home and start life anew on the other side of the world, but the nineteenth century saw a considerable outpouring of people from Britain. Around the turn of the century an average of about 30,000 were leaving each year and this number doubled to 60,000 in 1830. In the period 1847-1849 an average of more than 250,000 people departed each year. While famine in Ireland in 1848, and hardship in England and Scotland may have been contributory causes for many emigrants, [2] it seems hardly likely in the case of Lawson. Whatever motivated him to travel we do not know, so this must remain an area for speculation.

The first stage of the journey from Fifeshire to London must have been an exciting experience in 1854. Presumably it was by rail, as the eighteen

---

1 Robert Arthur Lawson, *DIARY 13 July to 2 November 1854*, Archives, Hocken Library, Dunedin.

2 David Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin, 1950, p. 94.

thirties and forties were the boom years for railway development in Britain, and long journeys by road were becoming rare. [3]

The boarding of the Tongataboo took place on 13 July 1854 but by the 22nd it had not proceeded very far as it was becalmed all day at Start Point near Plymouth off the coast of Devon. On this day Lawson recorded his intention to undertake regular work and studies with the hope that he would be able to prepare a design for a church in the Gothic style.

Lawson must have been a serious, even pious young man for we learn from a diary entry on Saturday 29 July that he was to be the conductor of the weekly church services aboard ship for the duration of the voyage. He was also keen on studies. Entries on Monday 31 July and Wednesday 9 August refer to looking at trigonometry and logarithms, designing a Mansion in the Tudor Gothic style and copying over a sketch of his village.

Friday 11 and Saturday 19 August contain references to feeling unwell but in general the diary refrains from any comment on health. Serious study must have been very difficult with the constant movement of the ship, exacerbated by heat and high winds which persisted through a good part of the voyage.

Thursday 24 August saw Lawson finishing a sketch of his village and proposing to commence a sketch of Lindore's Abbey, near Newburgh, Fife. On Friday 25 August he commenced an 'Italian' design for a public building, and completed it by Friday 1 September.

---

[3] G.M. Trevelyan, *English Social History*, London, Longmans Green & Co., 1942, p. 532.

A report of the formation of a moustache growing club appears on Monday 4 September. Its members included the captain of the ship, Captain McFie, and Messrs Huggins, John Scott, Stubbs, Cummins, Tonkins and Lawson. During the voyage a number of social activities took place. One of the exciting activities was a 'Crossing the Line' ceremony. On occasions damage was caused by heavy seas.

Towards the end of the journey on Friday 22 October Lawson reported seeing Gough's Island or Diego Alvarez, near the Island of Trinidad, the principal feature being a mountain reaching some 4385 feet (1245.108 metres) in height above sea level. By Thursday 26 September he had written a letter of thanks to Captain McFie on behalf of the passengers and on Monday 30 October there was a final night celebration.

It was on Tuesday 31 October that Lawson awoke to see land within four miles and the Port Philip heads before them. The Tongataboo anchored in Hobson's Bay in Williamstown about 10.00 p.m. amidst a host of other shipping. He records the lights ashore gleaming brightly, while far and wide were scattered the mist clad hills and dales of Australasia.

The journey had lasted for 111 days from 13 July to 31 October 1854, and no doubt as it reached its end the build up of excitement was intense. With the arrival at their destination the passengers would probably have had a feeling of anti-climax. This was certainly the effect on Lawson and his reactions both on the 31st of October and the 1st of November are best recorded in his own words:

Tuesday 31 October 1854

> 'It seemed as if a sudden reaction was the natural effect of the over excitement of the last few days for I fell down, down in spirits till I almost reached the freezing point and it was in vain that I attempted to throw off the load which seemed to crush down my poor spirits from their usual equal flow . . .

Wednesday 1 November

> 'After alighting from the railway from Sandridge to Melbourne I found myself amid a confusion which I most certainly did not expect, the streets were, in their general form strait enough, but the different styles and proportions of the various houses were neither strait nor elegant wood, brick, stone, stucco and zinc or iron, one after another filed off into the dim perspective. Some reaching two, some three, and most of all one story high - and as to design or fine taste displayed in their erection certainly I could see but little, however on driving a little further into this labyrinth I could see here and there more creditable specimens and a church or two bearing some evidence of some little thought being expended in their construction.
>
> On coming the length of Collins Street, what is considered as the best and most bustling of all, I saw a good many shops of no mean dimensions - buildings scattered apart of tasteful construction - a busy people passing hither and thither on its pavements . . . but for all the bustle and din there, it seemed as if it were a deserted half idle city.

Thursday 2 November records the final words in the diary

> ' - and the good ship had bravely borne us onward safe to the goal of our own Journey - So with regrets we leave them, "Good Ship Tongataboo" - and with regret we bid you "farewell".

Lawson was now on the threshold of a new life.

CHAPTER TWO

EARLY YEARS

The early years of R.A. Lawson are mostly wrapped in obscurity which is apparently self-imposed, for nowhere in his diary are there any references to family members, and this pattern continued throughout his life. It seems therefore, that his professional career and family matters were segregated into watertight compartments.

The following information was obtained from the North East Fife District Council, which advised that nothing further was available from the extant Parish records for Abdie, Fifeshire, Scotland.

Robert Arthur Lawson, family:

Grandfather:	John Lawson
Father:	James Lawson, carpenter and sawmiller.
	Married Margaret Arthur on 4 March 1825
Children of marriage:	
Helen:	born 1825
Walter:	born 1829
Thomas:	born 1830
Robert Arthur:	born 1 January 1833,
	christened 13 January 1833
Mary:	born 1836 [4]

[4] Information from *North East Fife District Council*, Cupar, Fife, Scotland, 2 May 1990.

Robert Arthur Lawson was educated at the Parish School under John Cameron. (Fig. 2) John Cameron also taught D.M. Stuart who was later destined to become the Rev. Dr. Stuart, Minister of Knox Church, Dunedin, New Zealand.

ARCHITECTURAL TRAINING

Heiton and Heiton [5]

This was a father and son partnership with an extensive practice in Perth. Andrew Heiton II (1823-1894) was first apprenticed to his father, and in 1842 went to the office of Burn and David Bryce, Edinburgh. William Burn (1789-1870) later in his career became a prolific country house architect. Two such examples are Rochford Hall, Lincolnshire, 1839-41, and Harlaxton Manor in Lincolnshire, the latter being noted for a spectacular and unusual Baroque staircase. David Bryce (1803-76) was first a pupil of Burn, then later his partner. Two of his well known projects are the British Linen Bank, St Andrew's Square, Edinburgh 1846-51, and the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh 1870-79.

---

[5] Doubt exists as to the name of the firm Lawson was apprenticed to in Perth. It is described as "Andrew and Andrew Heaton" by Arthur L. Salmond in *the Building of First Church*, Dunedin Public Library, but as "Anderson and Anderson" with reference to the Unveiling of a Memorial Tablet [Otago Daily Times 27.11.1933]. An enquiry to the Royal Institute of British Architects, London, elicited the name of "Heiton and Heiton". With respect to "Anderson and Anderson", a further enquiry to the Perth and Kinross district Council, Perth, Scotland, brought forth the following reply on 23 May 1990:

> As with the R.I.B.A., we have no record of any firm of architects called Anderson and Anderson in Perth. The name is not mentioned in any of the classified lists of Architects in the early local directories going back to 1837, nor in the Index of Architects attached to the Scottish Development's 'List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest in Perth Burgh'.

Following his experience with Burn and Bryce, Andrew Heiton II rejoined his father as a partner in 1848 and it was about this time that Lawson entered the office. The practice specialised in Scottish Baronial country houses, a typical example of which is "Dunalastair", Perthshire. [6] (Fig. 3)

Gillespie Graham

Lawson completed his training with James Gillespie Graham (1776-1855) in Edinburgh about 1851-1854. James Gillespie from Dunblane in Perthshire, met and married a Perthshire heiress, Margaret Graham, in 1815, and thereafter his name became James Gillespie Graham. He was the first in Scotland to commence his career as a Gothic architect and his reputation was strengthened after 1829 by an association with A.W.N. Pugin. He had an impressive number of Gothic country houses and churches to his credit. From 1800 when he was working in the Macdonald family seat, Armidale House, he was employed almost continuously on the Macdonalds' estates for nearly a quarter of a century.

Three only, of Graham's numerous works are selected for comment. *Duns Castle* and estate 16 miles west of Berwick. Between 1818-22 more than £23,000 was spent by William Hay of Drummelzier under the direction of Graham, turning the 14th century peel tower and its later wing into one of Scotland's finest, and least spoilt, early 19th century Gothic castles. (Fig. 4)

---

6 Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840,* London, pp. 411-12.

As a classical designer, Gillespie Graham is best represented by two works:

(1) *Gray's Hospital*, Elgin, 1815-19. (Fig. 5) The principal feature is the main entrance portico supported on four Roman Doric columns, above which is a dome and drum set on an octagonal base. The germ of the idea for this may have come from the 'Tower of the Winds', Athens (1st century B.C.).

(2) *Work on the Moray Estate*, in the New Town of Edinburgh for the Earl of Moray 1822-30. Graham was employed by the Earl of Moray to prepare leasing plans for a development area extending westwards from an older urban rectilinear plan of James Craig dated 1769.

Instead of continuing Craig's grid plan, Graham's talents found expression in exploiting the difficult sloping site to provide a masterpiece of urban planning, the centre-piece of which is the polygonal Moray Place. (Fig. 6) Moray Place itself has been described as, "in the way of private building, the most splendid thing in Edinburgh" [7], following as it does the general form established for Charlotte Square by Robert Adam. This includes a uniform height for buildings three storeys high, plus attics and basements. Principal elevations are centred on pediments mounted on four classical three quarter columns, Corinthian as used by Adam, Roman Doric by Gillespie Graham. (Fig. 7)

Graham had a long and illustrious career which later included collaboration between himself and Pugin on a number of Gothic projects and a design for the Houses of Parliament in 1836. However, when Lawson joined him

7 A.J. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, Edinburgh 1966. Details of the Moray Estate are contained on pages 216-25.

around 1851 he was at the very end of his professional career, but there would have been many drawings of Graham's earlier practice around the office. The visual townscape of Edinburgh would also have made an impact and created a lasting impression. There was work by William Playfair, Robert Adam, David Rhind, William Burn, David Bryce and many others surrounding Lawson on all sides.

Suggestions as to other architectural influences which may have impressed themselves on the mind of the young man are added in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

ARCHITECTURAL INFLUENCES

References by Lawson in his diary to a sketch of his native village, and an intended sketch of Lindores Abbey indicate that he was visually aware of his surroundings. Lindores Abbey [8] while a ruin in Lawson's day, has an interesting history which dates back to the time of William the Conqueror. Sacked in 1543 during the Reformation, it was founded by David, the Earl of Huntingdon around 1191 on land given to him by his brother King William I.

The Religious Order, a reformed class of Benedictine, was known as Tironensian and was colonised from Kelso. Guido the first Abbot of Lindores who died in 1219 supervised most of the building work. The site, which is about half a mile (.805 kilometres) east of Newburgh overlooks the estuary of the River Tay. The abbey was built of local red sandstone and this can be seen today in a fragment of wall with gateway. (Fig. 8) The ground plan has been defined by excavations carried out about the middle of the nineteenth century (Fig. 9) so it may not have been seen by Lawson, but the fragment of wall, and ruin of the cloister (Fig. 10) would have been known to him.

Sadly, from the 17th century on the abbey was used as a quarry to provide slate, timber, stone and carvings for the building of houses in Newburgh.

---

8 *Abbey of Lindores.* The abbey originally covered a very wide area, but its extent is not discernable today because many of the buldings to the south have been destroyed and the Newburgh-Newport road cuts through the old living quarters. Information from the North East Fife District Museum Service, and Historical Monuments (Scotland) Commission.

GOTHIC

The Gothic style had a profound influence on Lawson and is reflected in his ecclesiastical work. His earlier ambition to design a church in the Gothic mode came to fruition in 1861 when he won the design competition for the First Church of Otago, Dunedin.

Gillespie Graham had designed a number of churches in this style, his finest steeple being at Montrose in 1832-4. His spires in turn were developed from medieval precedents, in particular the one at Louth in Lincolnshire. The Tolbooth St. John's Church, Edinburgh (1841-4) is a unique work resulting in collaboration between Graham and A.W.N.Pugin, and this undoubtedly was an influence on Lawson. [9] (Fig. 11)

Links with Tolbooth can be seen in First Church, but the criteria for design in terms of form, layout, detail, size of towers and spires, and constructional methods had been developed over some six hundred years, and Lawson in effect was treading a well worn path. By far the greatest percentage of his output was in the form of ecclesiastical work, churches and associated buildings, but this was by no means all. His secular works reflected other styles some of which are quite outstanding.

The thesis, therefore, will concentrate on this aspect, not to minimise the scope of the church work, but to reduce the contents to within manageable limits.

---

[9] Dr David M. Walker, *Historic Buildings and Monuments*, Scottish Development Department, Edinburgh comments on First Church as follows:- This is very much Gillespie Graham based, the spire being adapted from Pugin and Gillespie Graham's Victoria Hall, (latterly Tolbooth St. John's Church) Edinburgh, while the gabled flanks are typical of Scottish practice in the late 1840s and 1850s.

SCOTTISH BARONIAL

Aspects of this style are to be seen in such buildings as Park's School, Dunedin; Brooklands Farmhouse, Goodwood; and Seacliff Mental Asylum. Indeed, on 27 February 1888, Lawson, at the Commission of Inquiry into Seacliff, made specific reference to a book by Robert Kerr in which the style is described.

Peculiar features of the style include small turrets on the angles of the building, sometimes carried up from the ground, and sometimes built out on corbelling. Crow stepped gables are used, battlemented parapets, and generally small windows. Almost always a main tower is introduced, and over the whole, in one form or another, there is a severe, heavy, crude, castellated character. [10] (Fig. 12) The style is essentially French of the Tudor period, modified by the Scots.

TUDOR

Aspects of Tudor, such as square headed mullion windows, high gables, grouped chimneys, angle pinnacles and crenellated roof lines can be seen in the Benevolent Institution, Caversham, (since demolished) and in the Otago Boys' High School. The latter shows touches of W.H. Playfair's Donaldson's Hospital, Edinburgh at the tower, (Fig. 13) and is probably a reflection of Gillespie Graham's lost competition design which is known to have been Jacobean. [11]

---

[10] Robert Kerr, F.R.I.B.A., *The Gentleman's House*, London, 1871. The Scotch Baronial Style, pp. 376-7.

[11] Dr David M. Walker, *Historic Buildings and Monuments*, Scottish Development Department, Edinburgh.

CLASSICAL

In the eighteenth century freedom for banking was introduced into Scotland and thereafter the classical orders became a preferred means of proclaiming status and dignity. When Lawson designed his two classical banks in Oamaru, and the Union Bank, Dunedin, the role model is likely to have been the Commercial Bank of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1843. Designed by David Rhind for one of Scotland's largest banking enterprises, the necessary facilities were designed around an unfettered central axis, with a magnificent processional sequence of grand interiors. Lawson's banks use the Corinthian order with pedimented porticoes to form the main elevations, but the orders are applied more as external decoration, whereas the Rhind building is a totally integrated three dimensional classical scheme. (Fig. 14)

PALAZZO

This style is derived from the Renaissance Palazzi of Florence and Rome, notably the Palazzo Farnese, Rome. (Fig. 15) The first major palazzo elevation in the nineteenth century in Britain was the Reform Club of Pall Mall, London, in 1837 by Sir Charles Barry. (Fig. 16) This was followed in Glasgow in 1841 by David and James Hamilton with their Western Club, a three and a half storey variation on Barry's theme. [12]

In Scotland the palazzo facade for banks appeared early. An ornate trend developed and the British Linen Bank, Edinburgh, 1846, by David Bryce illustrates the point. Classical features include Corinthian columns, with broken cornices over, surmounted by statues; balustrading at roof level;

---

[12] Roger Dixon & Stephan Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1978, pp. 76-7.

carved panels within the frieze; balustraded balconies with bracketted pediments to windows, and rusticated stonework to facade at ground floor level. [13] (Fig. 17)

ITALIANATE

Lawson in his diary referred to an "Italian design". It may be regarded as a variant of the Classical tradition. Round arches were a characteristic feature of a style which was eclectic, drawing inspiration from a variety of buildings. Palazzo and Italianate styles developed in the nineteenth century. One such building was the Royal Exchange, London, 1841-4. It was shown in the Illustrated London News, 1844 and could conceivably have come to the notice of Lawson. Among other things it comprised giant Corinthian pilasters, but main interest lies in the ornate clock tower located on the rear facade. (Fig. 18)

CIVIC ARCHITECTURE

The Reform Act of 1832, followed by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, saw the burgeoning of Civic Architecture in Britain; Civic buildings usually served a variety of functions. Such a building would often contain a large hall for public meetings, concerts and so on, and normally accommodated the municipal offices, town clerk's office, treasurer's office and council chamber as minimum requirements. On the outside, one characteristic symbol of the public nature of the building was the clock tower or turret. [14] The Leeds Town Hall by Cuthbert Brodrick, 1853-8, with its ornate clock tower is a civic building on a truly monumental scale. (Fig. 19) Although Gothic civic complexes were not unknown, the preferred expression came to be

[13] Roger Dixon & Stefan Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, p.130.

[14] ibid, p. 144.

developed through the classic orders with deviations such as Palazzo and Italianate styles. Lawson must have been aware of these architectural developments when he wrote in his diary for 1854, "Finishing an Italian design for a Public Building".

VICTORIAN ATTITUDES

The Victorians reacted quite deliberately against what they regarded as the dull, uniform architecture of Georgian England. Whilst they allowed for a limited amount of specialization such as Gothic for churches and Classical or Renaissance motifs on public buildings, their architecture was by and large eclectic. The majority liked a diversity or a blending of styles. They were seldom afraid of exuberance and loved symbolism, and as the nineteenth century went by, banks and shops became more and more ornate and decorated, and even mills, warehouses and docks became places to decorate. [15]

Australian and New Zealand architecture was essentially derivative, embracing Gothic, Classical and Italianate forms. In New Zealand the distinctive attitude towards architecture that characterises the Victorian period was slow to find expression. Before 1850 settlement was extremely limited and most buildings were in a simple, functional, folk tradition that reflected pioneering conditions in the young country. The full rich diversity of Victorian architectural ideas did not have a major impact upon building in New Zealand until the 1860s, when a limited amount of specialization occurred, with Gothic for churches, and Classical and Italianate for public

[15] Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968, pp. 45-46.

and commercial buildings. It was the Italianate manner, rather than differences between Greek or Roman orders, which was of far more importance as a rival to the Gothic revival. The diversity of the Italianate style offered something for everyone, and above all offered architects and builders freedom to experiment in search of the picturesque. [16]

Lawson, having experience of Victorian developments before he left Britain, and being in Melbourne and the goldfields at the time of unprecedented growth, was later able to take an effective part in the development of architecture in Otago, New Zealand.

---

[16] Graeme Wynn, *Historical News No. 34*, Whitcoulls, March 1977.
Derivative Symbolism: Urban Architecture of the Victorian Period in New Zealand.

CHAPTER FOUR

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA 1854-1861

Lawson arrived in Melbourne when it had entered the most explosive rate of growth in its history, sparked off by the discovery of gold in 1851. It was in 1851 also that the part of New South Wales, south of the Murray River, obtained separation and self-government as the colony of Victoria. The youthful Melbourne incorporated as a city in 1842 was composed of buildings largely pioneer, ill-built and totally inadequate for a rapidly expanding population of 77,000 in 1851, 236,000 in 1854, and over 500,000 by 1861.

Following the discovery of gold, existing Melbourne architects were joined by a deluge of colleagues from overseas including such trained and able practitioners as Clark, Purchas, and Knight who were able to enrich the city with the finest classical public buldings in Australia. Another famous name in Melbourne is Joseph Reed, who, arriving about 1852 won a competition for the Melbourne Public Library in 1854, and in 1855 was commissioned to design the town hall for Geelong. [17]

Thousands of immigrants were attracted by the gold discoveries and huge quantities of goods, including prefabricated buildings were brought in. The number and great diversity of prefabricated buildings brought to Australia are in architectural terms perhaps the most distinctive, and certainly the most technically interesting aspects of Australian architectural

[17] Freeland J.M. Architecture in Australia, F.W. Cheshire Publishing, Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1968, p. 128.

development. Importation was on a scale not previously known, and in 1853 alone £370,000 worth of buildings arrived when a small cottage at this time might cost £10. Relatively few of the portable buildings reached the goldfields themselves, because of the difficulty and expense of transporting them,so in these areas the earliest buildings were huts of a transitory nature and tents. [18]

LAWSON'S SITUATION

Given the turbulence of the times, the flood of architectural practitioners already operating, and the importation of portable buildings on such a vast scale, the prospects for a young, unknown immigrant architect would not be encouraging. Information on Lawson's whereabouts during this time is somewhat vague, but it seems he might have been involved with mining at Ballarat and acted as a correspondent for newspapers in Geelong and Melbourne. [19]

STEIGLITZ FREE CHURCH SCHOOL

Architectural commissions would be very hard to come by but in 1857 Lawson submitted a scheme for Steiglitz Free Church School. The school which had originally been intended as a National school, was transferred to the Denominational School Board. There seems to have been a distinct shortage of funds for school purposes in those days. The dimensions for this particular school which were shared by many at the time, comprised a classroom length of 30 feet (9.144 metres) by 16 feet (4.877 metres) plus two

---

[18] *The Illustrated Register of the National Estates*, Macmillan, Australia, 1981 Architecture from Colonial Origins by Miles Lewis, p. 75.

[19] Arthur L. Salmond, *First Church of Otago*, Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin, 1983, p. 26.

ancilliary rooms, one a Master's room 9'6" x 6"6" (2.896 x 1.981m) and the other a bedroom 6'6" x 6'6" (1.981 x 1.981m). The scheme was modest in the extreme being constructed of timber with a corrugated iron roof. [20] (Fig. 20)

PRIVATE PRACTICE

In 1861 Lawson set up an office in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, and it was on 2 December 1861 that the Deacons Court of the First Church of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, received authority to proceed with a new church and manse on Church Hill, Dunedin. For this purpose advertisements for an architectural competition appeared in the Otago Daily Times on 23 January 1862, and the Otago Witness on 25 January 1862, which carried the advertisement for ten consecutive issues until 29 March 1862. [21] It is not known how extensively the competition was advertised, but news of it reached Lawson for he submitted the winning design. It is also not known how many designs were submitted as the Deacons Court minutes covering this period are missing. [22]

Conditions for the competition were set out under the heading COMPETITION DESIGN FOR A CHURCH. These included the requirements for the church to be built of stone, to accommodate one thousand sittings, to provide a vestry and library, with the cost not to exceed £9000. Lawson's winning entry was submitted from Melbourne under the pseudonym of "Presbyter", and comprised six presentation drawings

20 Lawrence Burchell, *Victorian Schools*: A Study in Colonial Government Architecture 1837-1900, Melbourne University Press, 1980, p. 26.

21 Otago Witness (Dunedin) 25 January - 29 March 1862 (10 issues).

22 Arthur L. Salmond, *First Church of Otago*, p. 26.

consisting of plan, elevations, and sections.

This must be regarded as the turning point of Lawson's career, for, following this success, he arrived in Dunedin some time before the middle of 1862.

CHAPTER FIVE

OTAGO

INTRODUCTION

The years 1862-1888 were to prove the most fruitful and productive of Lawson's career starting with the development of First Church. However, through circumstances beyond his control, which included the demolition of Bell Hill, work on First Church was to extend over many years. While the official opening eventually took place on 13 November 1873, work was to continue for some years after that.

The saga of First Church took its course but in the meantime it was necessary for the young Lawson to build his career and reputation. This normally takes time and starts with small schemes. One such is reported in the Otago Witness for 7 February, 1863, under the heading, BELL TOWER. Mr R.A.Lawson had prepared drawings and specifications which included two rooms for a watchman, and accommodation for a small engine. The estimate for this modest scheme was £395, but it is not known whether the project went ahead.[23]

---

[23] Otago Witness (Dunedin), 7 February, 1863, 3.

BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION

Lawson was involved with this organisation over a number of years. It was reported on 5 April, 1862 that a Benevolent Asylum Committee had obtained from the Government the promise of a site for the proposed asylum. [24] The first meeting of this committee took place at the office of Mr Strode, [25] on 24 April, 1862, when names of the members of the committee were made public. [26]

On 7 February 1863 a Tender Notice appeared in the Otago Witness for the erection of the North Wing of the Dunedin Benevolent Asylum on a site at the head of Rattray Street. The building was described as being designed in the Tudor style of architecture. Lawson normally preferred symmetrical architectural compositions and, as described, this one followed his usual pattern. It contained a centre main block with a first floor level oriel window over a central archway, through which the main entrance led to a principal staircase which continued upwards into a tower. This tower rose from the centre of the main block, and was finished with an octagonal battlemented dome, and crochet finial terminating at a height of 80 feet (24.384 metres). Disposed on each side of the main block were side wings appropriated to male and female inmates. Accommodation was to provide for fifty inmates in each wing with fifty in the centre, a total of one hundred and fifty. Plans and specifications of the proposed building were to be seen in the office of the

---

24 Otago Witness (Dunedin), 5 April, 1862

25 A. Chetham Strode, was the first Resident Magistrate in Dunedin, and it was he who first proposed a Benevolent Institution. He presided over its affairs for many years.

26 Otago Witness (Dunedin), 24 May 1862.

architect Mr R.A. Lawson, Princes Street. The cost ceiling was £11,000. [27]

The original scheme did not proceed because the site proved to be too small, but the Benevolent Institution was later located in Caversham on a more suitable site, and the first wing was erected by January 1866. It seems most likely that the building erected in Caversham if not identical to the one referred to in the tender notice of 7 February 1863 (Fig. 21) bore a striking resemblance to it in concept, plan and appearance. It is certainly Tudor in style with stone mullioned square topped windows, an oriel window with crenellated coping, steep pitched gables and roofs, with a crenellated roof line, and tall grouped chimneys. The tower and finial on the centre block, as designed, did not go ahead, but the rest of the building, as shown in the photograph (Fig. 22) relates pretty faithfully to the original design.

The origins of a Tudor style most likely had their roots in England. 'Pauper lunatics' were mostly kept in separate departments of workhouses, but by the 1840s it was generally thought desirable to accommodate them in special institutions. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 reformed the centuries-old English Poor Law by re-instituting workhouses which normally followed a pattern in the architectural sense. Of two storeys with several wings the most common style was a simplified classical, but in the 1840s there was a widespread preference for a 'vague' Tudor or Elizabethan style with gables and stone mullioned-windows. [28]

---

27 Otago Witness (Dunedin) 7 February, 1863.

28 Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1988 p. 110.

The Benevolent institution was founded in 1862. Later it became known as Talboys Home, then Parkside Hospital. It has since been demolished. In designing the building, Lawson would have gained much valuable experience for the time when he was commissioned to design the Seacliff Lunatic Asylum in the late 1870s.

PARK'S SCHOOL

On 19 August, 1863, the Daily Telegraph contained notification of a new school under the heading, DUNEDIN SCHOOL COMMITTEE, in which readers were informed that a new Southern District School was to be built at the head of Stafford Street and William Street, Dunedin. It was hoped to have the school opened on 1 January 1864. The headmaster for this new school was to be Mr John Brown Park, of Tasmania, a teacher of 20 years' experience. [29] A meeting was held on 11 November, 1863 and the school committee records that a sum of £2,300 was voted for the new school. The next monthly meeting held in December 1863 announced the calling of tenders for the building of the School-house for the South Dunedin School, specifications for which could be seen at the office of Mr R.A. Lawson, Architect. [30]

How Lawson received the commission is not known but his experience with the Steiglitz Free Church School scheme in 1857, modest though it was, at least gave him an insight into Australian Government school policies, and would have given him valuable experience of school requirements. Both Lawson and J.B.Park were in Australia at the same time, and although the

29 Daily Telegraph (Dunedin) 19 August, 1863, 4.

30 Daily Telegraph (Dunedin) 6 February 1864.

possibility that they could ever have met is remote, both would have had experience of school policies, one from the teaching side, and the other interpreting these needs in the form of buildings.

The chosen style for Park's School was Scottish Baronial. It had all the attributes referred to by Lawson later at the Seacliff Commission of Inquiry, stone dressings, crow stepped gables, steeply pitched slate roofing, and a corner tower surmounted by a turret. However, the strength of this particular design lies not so much in the style but in the three dimensional massing of the building. The plan as conceived is symmetrical in cruciform shape with the main axis parallel to Stafford Street, and the main elevation fronting William Street. In the constructional sense, too, the form is logical with the strongest possible support for the roof given the materials available, stone, brick and timber. At the William Street (south), and Stafford Street (east) corner, there is an infill of building at eaves level, with a crenellated roofline and a corner tower which effectively translates a symmetrical plan into an asymmetrical composition thus suiting the siting near the corner of two streets. (Fig. 23)

The school was opened on 15 February, 1864, and the main entrance was approached from William Street, near the south-east corner. Mrs Park's infant room was on the left, while, on the right, stairs led up to a belfry and a large room for seniors, with a room for juniors on the floor above. As the population in the district increased the classrooms became overcrowded, and a detached building, known as the infant room was built on high ground above the school proper. Later, a new school in High Street which replaced

Park's School was opened on 15 February 1887. [31]

The original building still survives but is now used as an apartment block for residential purposes. The exterior has been whitewashed, the corner tower above the roof line has been removed, and bay windows have replaced the original stone-mullioned windows to William Street, (south and west) and Stafford Street (east) elevations. In essence however the building remains as it was originally designed (Fig. 24).

BROOKLANDS, GOODWOOD, OTAGO

It was in 1867 that a farm homestead 'Brooklands', was designed for Mr James Hepburn by Lawson, who became closely related to the Hepburn family through marriage. It was on 15 November 1854 that Lawson married Jessie Sinclair Hepburn, daughter of George Hepburn, who was also the father of James Hepburn.

Arriving in the Port of Otago on 1 September 1850 from Fifeshire, Scotland, George Hepburn brought with him a wife and a large family. He soon purchased a property at Half Way Bush as a family home and later developed it as a farm. He was inducted as an Elder of First Church on 16 March 1851 and from the earliest years was involved with developments of First Church.

He had considerable influence in the affairs of Otago. In 1855 he was returned as one of the representatives of the Wakari District in the second

---

31 Information from Souvenir Booklet, *Park's - High Street School, Diamond Jubilee, 1864-1924,* pp. 9-16.

Provincial Council, and in 1866 was elected a member of the Provincial Assembly, besides being Chairman of the School Committee in his district of Wakari.

THE HOMESTEAD

The purchase of Brooklands in 1857 on behalf of his sons George and James is best described in George Hepburn's own words

> '..., that is to say, that in one short week we completed the purchase of an heritable estate of 500 acres, together with all the buldings erected thereon, and movables, etc., upwards of 40 miles distance ...' [32]

A return visit to Brooklands by George Hepburn in 1861 found it thriving, and he noted a new barn of stone and lime size 40ft by 20ft under construction, which remains to this day.

The design concept for Brooklands is developed on a main longitudinal axis. At right angles to this, two minor axes complete a tee with two stems. A one and a half storey building with steeply pitched roofs, it results in bedrooms with sloping ceilings. This was a common tradition with cottar houses in Scotland. As for Park's School the gables are crow stepped. At the main entrance square pillars support a stone balustraded portico, over which a dormer window is set into the roof. The front elevation is completed with a three light window at ground floor level and a two light window above it. (Fig. 25) The side elevation (Fig. 26) is unsatisfactory with truncated gables,

---

[32] *The Journal of George Hepburn*, edited by his grandson William Downie Stewart, Coulls, Somerville, Wilkie Ltd., and A.H.Reed, Dunedin, 1934.

nondescript windows and lean-to roof. A front room, living room, lean-to kitchen, scullery and bathroom make up the ground floor accommodation, with five small bedrooms at first floor level. The building was originally finished in stone but has been roughcast at some stage. [33]

Brooklands still stands on a grassy slope at Goodwood north of Waikouaiti. It was one of Lawson's early commissions which resulted from his family and church connections.

33 Lois Galer, *Houses and Homes*, Allied Press Ltd., Dunedin, 1981, pp 46-7.

CHAPTER SIX

BANK BUILDINGS

Lawson perhaps preferred to work in Gothic, 'Scottish Baronial', and Tudor styles but was also capable of producing classical architecture. Edinburgh had been dubbed, 'The Athens of the North', so he was surrounded by classical buildings when he was at an impressionable age. In New Zealand, banking institutions were to provide Lawson with the opportunity to demonstrate his skills in this direction. He is known to have been associated with a number of banks, and three of these are selected for comment because of their widely acclaimed qualities.

BANK OF OTAGO, 1871 (Fig. 27)

The Bank of Otago has been described as a reduced version of the Commercial Bank of Scotland, Edinburgh, but there are important differences as pointed out later, and it does not mean that Lawson was simply copying the work of another architect. Sir John Summerson expresses this succinctly:

> '. . . it is a mistake ever to think of the five orders of architecture as a sort of child's box of bricks which architects have used to save themselves the trouble of inventing. It is much better to think of them as grammatical expressions imposing a formidable discipline, but a discipline within which personal sensibility always has a certain play. . .'[34]

---

34 Sir John Summerson, *The Classical Language of Architecture,* Thames and Hudson, London, 1988, p.13.

The bank was designed in the late 1860s and in 1869 Thomas Forrester was appointed supervising architect and took up residence in Oamaru accordingly. Forrester who had previously worked for Lawson possessed among other publications, 'Antiquities of Athens and Monuments of Greece', by Stuart and Revett, and Lawson himself would have been familiar with these. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Lawson was well equipped to undertake this commission.

The architect's concept is governed by the requirements of the site and its location, the amount of accommodation required by the client, and the cost of the project. In this particular case the street frontage, that is, the actual width of the site, led the architect to conclude that a proper scale could be achieved by using a portico and pediment supported on four Corinthian columns. Why the Corinthian Order? It is suggested there were three main reasons, the first, most likely being the successful use in the Commercial Bank of Scotland, Edinburgh. The second would be the preference of the architect. The third, and in some ways the most important is that suitable stone and the craftsmen skilled enough to work it should be available. In Oamaru, limestone was first used cautiously in the early 1860s, because the high cost of imported timber had encouraged experimentation with stone. Several quarries were opened close to the town and limestone became the preferred building material by the mid 1860s.

One major difference between the Commercial Bank of Scotland and the Bank of Otago, quite apart from size, is the concept. The former is designed around an unfettered axis which leads through a processional sequence of grand interiors to a garden at the rear. The entrance vestibule leads to a top-

lit Saloon with a double tier of columns behind which, two symmetrically placed Roman staircases ascend to the Boardroom. Behind the Saloon lies a cruciform Banking Hall, top-lit from an oculus in its dome and approached through screens of columns. By contrast, the internal arrangements of the Bank of Otago, which in any case are far more modest, do not relate to the exterior except to the extent that the Banking Chamber is placed on the central axis of the building as entered from Thames Street. This means that the front elevation could be described as applied decoration, but it does not detract from the fine proportions and the skill of the architect who was responsible for them.

The newspaper of the day carried a full description of the new bank as the contract was nearing completion. [35]

The building comprises ground floor, first floor, and basement with a total height from basement to roof of 45ft. (13.716m). It is built of Oamaru stone from Fortification Quarries, while the decorative carved stone details were executed in Taipo Hill stone.

The front facade is divided into five bays by fluted Corinthian pilasters. Windows in these bays are alternately square and round-headed, and the main entrance doors are in the centre bay. The Portico - length 30ft (9.144m) projection 10ft (3.048m) - and pediment are supported on four Corinthian columns each 24ft. (7.315m) high. Displayed quoins with raised panels and vermiculated faces set off the external angles of the building.

---

[35] Oamaru Times (Oamaru) 21 February 1871.

The ground floor accommodates the Banking Chamber which is 24ft (7.315m) by 23ft (7.010m), and also the Manager's Room, stationery room and ancilliaries. The banking chamber is completed with a coffered plastered ceiling in nine panels. Originally there was also domestic accommodation on the ground floor which comprised dining room and drawing room, each 20ft (6.096m) by 18ft (5.486m).

The basement contained domestic accommodation in seven rooms, including kitchen, dayroom, larder and servants' bedrooms. On the first floor there were four bedrooms, but there are no longer domestic quarters within the building.

The Bank of Otago had an early demise, but in 1873 the National Bank moved in and remains there to this day.

UNION BANK, PRINCES STREET, DUNEDIN, 1874 (Fig. 28)

Following the success of the Bank of Otago in Oamaru the architect adopted the Corinthian style for the Union Bank in Dunedin. The site in Dunedin was somewhat larger at 60 ft (18.288m) by 54 ft (16.459m) as against 50 ft (15.240m) by 40ft (12.192m) in Oamaru, but the Dunedin site differed mainly in that it was steeply sloping and was on a corner facing Princes Street, and Liverpool Street. Once construction started in Dunedin the site presented other problems because a sand bed was encountered and this necessitated the sinking of foundations to a depth, in some cases, 24ft (7.315m) below the level of the Liverpool Street floor. [36]

[36] Otago Witness (Dunedin) 12 September, 1874.9.

The building comprises three storeys, ground floor, basement, and first floor. The ground floor is the banking floor entered at street level from Princes Street. The main banking hall is 44ft (13.411m) by 29ft (8.839m) and there is a Manager's room, safe rooms, cloakrooms, and a room housing the staircase which rises to the first floor. Originally the basement and first floor were occupied as dwelling apartments by officers of the Bank, but the whole space is now used for banking purposes.

The main facade to Princes Street is divided into five bays by fluted Corinthian pilasters. Within the bays are round headed windows at first floor level and square headed windows at ground floor level. The main feature is a pedimented portico supported on four Corinthian columns. The Corinthian Order has been faithfully followed. Starting from the ground up it comprises pedestal with plinth, dado, and fascia; column base, fluted column shaft, capital with carved acanthus leaves, and above that the architrave, frieze and cornice. The termination of the facade at each side is effected by pairs of fluted Corinthian pilasters.

The return facade to Liverpool street complements the main facade but does not dominate. Three central bays contain windows, round headed at first floor and basement levels, and square headed at ground floor level. Framing these bays are four three-quarter Corinthian columns which rise through two storeys, and closing the elevation at each side are paired fluted Corinthian pilasters. The upper portion of the facade is completed with architrave, frieze, cornice, and attic. The steeply sloping nature of the site means that the basement finish becomes a prominent feature. While the stone to the building generally is Oamaru stone from the Kakanui Quarries,

the stone to basement is from Port Chalmers, in very large blocks, heavily rusticated and rock faced.

The architect has demonstrated considerable skill in his solution of the architectural problems posed by the requirements of the client and the site.

BANK OF NEW SOUTH WALES, OAMARU (Fig. 29)

It was in 1882, eleven years after the Bank of Otago was opened that the site at No 9 Thames Street was purchased by the Bank of New South Wales. This site adjoins the old Bank of Otago (now National Bank). The premises built in 1884 were still occupied by the Bank of New South Wales in 1976, [37] but in 1983 were relinquished to become the Forrester Art Gallery.

Lawson was commissioned to design a bank featuring Corinthian columns and capitals carved with luxurious acanthus leaves. [38] This presented him with an aesthetic problem. Next to the proposed building stood the National Bank, of which the main architectural feature was a pedimented portico supported on four Corinthian columns. A similar pediment for the Bank of New South Wales would have produced a ludicrous duality. His solution was to provide a portico in the form of a HEXASTYLE surmounted by horizontal balustrading in place of a pediment. Proportions for the hexastyle required the width of the portico to be one and a half times the height, which was measured from the base of the column to the top of the cornice, [39] with

---

[37] Centennial booklet, *Bank of New South Wales*, Wellington, 1976 1896-1976, p.6.

[38] Norris' Brocklebank & Richard Greenaway, *Oamaru*, John McIndoe, Dunedin, 1979, 63.

[39] Sir Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture*, 1896, 12th edition, Batsford, London, 1945, p. 336.

balustrading being set above the cornice line. The 'Rules' by James Gibbs, 1732, divided the height from column base to the top of the cornice into six parts. A further one part from the top of the cornice determined the height of the balustrading. [40]

The main feature of the bank building is the front elevation facing Thames Street, with six Corinthian columns set on massive pedestals, and echoed at the wall face with matching Corinthian pilasters. The return elevations contain a rhythm of pilasters and windows. At first floor the windows are round headed while those at ground floor have square heads. The exterior finish is in Oamaru stone, rusticated to ground floor, and in plain ashlar above.

Originally the ground floor was used for banking facilities while domestic accommodation was provided on the first floor and in the basement.

While the classic revival may not have been Lawson's preferred style, the three banks serve as a testimony to his architectural ability, and also to the skills of the stonemasons who interpreted his ideas.

---

[40] James Gibbs, *Rules for Drawing the several parts of Architecture*, (1732), Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., English Universities Press, London, 1947.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TOWN HALL, DUNEDIN, 1876-1880

INTRODUCTION

Along with First Church, the Town Hall must be considered one of Lawson's most outstanding works. In the first case he obtained the commission as the outright winner of a competition, and in the second case as runner up.

CIVIC BUILDINGS

Requirements for civic buildings were well established in Britain in the nineteenth century, and in Australia, Melbourne produced the first town hall in 1854 closely followed by Geelong in 1855. New Zealand, too, was becoming conscious of its civic needs and in Dunedin as early as the 1860s various ideas had been considered and rejected.

At a meeting of the Dunedin City Council on 4 February, 1874, a motion to call for competitive designs for a Town Hall on a site in the Octagon lapsed after a marathon debate. [41] It was not until 15 May 1876 that a resolution in favour of the Octagon site was adopted, but even then there were problems as the site had been allocated for a reserve by the government. Legal difficulties meant

---

41 K.C.McDonald, *City of Dunedin, A Century of Civic Enterprise*, published by the D.C.C., Dunedin, 1965, p. 133.

the site was not finally secured until the 'Dunedin Town Hall Site Act, 1877, No. 11 (Local)' [42] was passed.

TOWN HALL COMMITTEE

In the meantime, the City Council had decided to proceed with obtaining designs and for this purpose, a Town Hall Committee was set up on 27 November 1876. A schedule of requirements was prepared for a scheme which was to be developed in stages, and was to cost not more than £30,000 in total. At a meeting on 26 January 1877, the decision was taken to advertise for design submissions in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland and Melbourne. [43]

Competitors were requested to submit designs for Municipal buildings which were to include a Town Hall, Municipal Offices, a Central Fire Brigade Station, and a Central Market. There were no restrictions as to style, the main criterion being that the final scheme should comprise an integrated whole. The City Council announced its intention to reserve rights of way on the east and west sides of the building for the purpose of giving access from the Octagon and preventing the building from being built against on those sides. It was thus necessary to design four architectural facades.

The cost limit for the first stage was set at £7,000 and was to include for municipal offices only, on three floors. The ground floor was to accommodate the City Surveyor's department in seven rooms, Gas Engineer in three

[42] ibid, p. 160.

[43] Dunedin City Council, Archives Department, Civic Centre, Dunedin.

rooms, dwelling for a messenger, and ancillaries. On the first floor nine rooms were allocated for the Town Clerk's department, and three for the City Treasurer. The Council Chamber size 53ft (16.154m) by 25ft. (7.620m) was to be provided on the second floor, together with Mayor's room, Mayor's office, Lady's reception room, library and ancillary accommodation.

The remainder of the accommodation required to complete the whole building included a great hall with seating for 2,000, a clock and observation tower, tea rooms, Fire Brigade premises, market buildings, and outbuildings.

Designs were to be submitted by 1 June 1877, and premiums of £200, £100, and £50 were offered for the first three designs but the council did not bind itself to employ the successful competitor to carry out the work.

The full text of the advertisement has been included in an Appendix [44].

RESULTS OF DESIGN COMPETITION

Nine submissions were considered at a meeting of the Town Hall Committee on 13 June 1877. Perspective drawings and front elevations of proposals were examined, after which the number of entries was reduced to five. These five entries were then considered by a sub-committee which reported back to the Town Hall Committee on 27 July 1877 when it was unanimously resolved that the first prize be awarded to a design entitled "In Haste", a pseudonym for

[44] Otago Daily Times (Dunedin) 31 January 1877, 2.

Thomas Bedford Cameron of Auckland, the second prize to, "Leo", a pseudonym for Robert Arthur Lawson of Dunedin, and the third prize to, "N.Z. Advance", from Melbourne. [45] None of these competition drawings survives. [46] The winning design was not the one ultimately carried out, but the competitor placed second, R.A. Lawson was appointed architect.

SELECTION OF ARCHITECT

The next meeting of the Town Hall Committee on 6 September 1877 considered several matters which had arisen after examining the first and second prize designs. It was found that the amount of office accommodation called for in the design conditions could not be provided with the sum of money voted by the Council. Reductions would be required, and to this end the City Surveyor, Mr Mirams was asked to submit a report.

It was recommended that an architect be employed to prepare plans to carry out the proposed reductions, and further that Mr Lawson be the architect, on the grounds that his submission had won second prize, that his main elevation was considered very suitable, and being resident in Dunedin he would be accessible at any time to render advice.

Finally, the committee was given power to make arrangements with Mr Lawson, [47] which effectively confirmed his appointment as architect for the project.

---

[45] *Town Hall Committee Minutes*, Dunedin City Council Archives, for 13 June and 27 July 1877.

[46] Confirmed by the City Architect's Department, D.C.C., on 7 November 1990.

[47] *Town Hall Committee Minutes*, for 6 September 1877.

The final policy decision regarding the New Municipal Buildings Complex was made at a meeting of the Town Hall Committee on 17 September 1877. At this meeting the Surveyor's report of 10 September relative to the proposed modifications in the Town Hall design was read, following which the Committee discussed the best method of altering the plans. It was resolved that the entrance and Tower to the Town Hall be in the centre of the Main front elevation, and the entrance to the Market be from the Octagon at the south corner.

At this meeting also, Lawson was instructed to prepare a pencil sketch of the proposed alterations, and on completion of this sketch another meeting was to be arranged. [48]

There is a suggestion that Lawson was no doubt reluctant to work on another man's plans and was eventually permitted to use his own. [49] Another version suggests that Lawson, a friend of Cameron, used the winning design and made some of his own modifications to it. [50] Whatever the actual position the City Council had the right to make its own determination in terms of the design competition.

> 'The Council does not bind itself, to employ the successful competitor to carry out the work'.

---

[48] *Town Hall Committee Minutes,* for 17 September 1877. Confirmation that the sketch does not survive was obtained from the City Architect's Department, Dunedin City Council on 7 November 1990. The status of plans held by the D.C.C. is that the main front elevation is a copy made in 1913, the original having disappeared. There are three extant original drawings including a section through the central tower.

[49] K.C.McDonald, *City of Dunedin: A Century of Divic Enterprise,* Dunedin, 1965, p. 160.

[50] Otago Daily Times (Dunedin) 15 November, 1989. 21 (Alana Reid)

DESIGN CONCEPT

The germ of the idea had been with Lawson at least since 1 September 1854 when he recorded in his diary that he was finishing an Italian design for a Public Building, and hoping that it would stand him in good stead in the future as a worthy memorial. The brief, by defining rights of way to the east and west had ensured a completely free site with the opportunity to design a detached block. The site itself would also influence design considerations, and being sloping, meant that of the three floors specified the lower one would be in the nature of a semi-basement rather than a ground floor.

Italian Renaissance Palazzi in Florence and Rome were generally in the form of large detached blocks of two or three storeys, crowned with massive cornices and built of huge blocks of rusticated masonry. Horizontality was emphasized in the design, windows were comparatively small with round heads and there was an absence of classical detail.

The Town Hall of Dunedin acknowledges a certain affinity with Renaissance Palazzi but it diverges from them with its application of classical detail to the exterior, its roofscape, and the provision of a clock tower. (Fig. 30) A striking feature of the facade is provided by the giant Corinthian pilasters which set the scale for the whole edifice. This motif had been used in the past by Italian architects of the Renaissance. At S. Andrea, Mantua by Alberti (begun in 1470) the facade motif of a massive wall pierced by a barrel vault is increased in majesty by giant pilasters which rise apparently through three storeys and frame the exact square of the facade. [51] Michelangelo used giant Corinthian

[51] Michael Greenhalgh, *The Classical Tradition in Art*, Duckworth, London, 1978, p. 132.

pilasters rising through two storeys in the Palazzo del Museo Capitolino, in his redesigning of the Capitol Hill, Rome which was begun in 1539. The giant pilasters solve the problem of linking two or more storeys without recourse to the 'Colosseum' solution of using one Order per storey, each with its own apparatus. [52]

The ground floor of the Dunedin Town Hall has been treated as a basement on which the pilasters are seated. The architectural style and treatment corresponds to the functions of the rooms at each level. The basement has a rusticated treatment for the council departmental offices, while the square cut masonry finish to the upper floors, the double exterior staircase and entrance, accord with the status of the higher officials.

The pedestals, Corinthian pilasters, architrave, frieze and cornice surmounted by the balustrading present a unified and proportional whole. At second floor the windows are round headed while those at first floor level are square headed, alternate windows being surmounted with pediments supported on miniature Roman Doric columns. The main entrance at first floor level is approached by a double flight of stairs with stone balustrading and capping. It has a balustraded balcony over, which is supported on twin pairs of miniature Doric columns.

CLOCK TOWER

The nineteenth century saw the development of ornate clock-towers for civic buildings in Britain and Australia. Two such buildings in Australia which

---

[52] Michael Greenhalgh, *The Classical Tradition in Art*, p. 142.

Lawson would have seen or known about are the Melbourne Town Hall (Fig. 31) (1867-1870) by Reed and Barnes, and the South Melbourne Town Hall (Fig. 32) (1880) by Charles Webb. The former has a clock-tower located at the right hand side of the front facade. An impressive feature in three tiers it has a curved roof and is surmounted by a cupola and flagstaff. The latter is more ornate in four tiers with cornices, miniature columns, round headed windows, clock faces, pediments and other ornamentation. It would have been too late to influence Lawson with his design but indicates the trends which were then in vogue.

The Dunedin Town Hall clock tower is in four tiers. The first tier contains round headed windows to all four faces, clock faces over, pilasters to external angles and a massive cornice surmounted by a balustrade. The second tier, the belfry, houses the bells, and has open arches supported on miniature Doric columns. Above the arches is an entablature comprising architrave, frieze and cornice. The third tier consists of round headed windows to all faces decorated with urns capped by finials, three per window, while similar decoration completes the four external angles. Behind these faces a curved roof supports the fourth and final tier. This level has an observation gallery with decorative metal railings, and access is given by round headed doorways. Finally a curved roof over supports a flagstaff which crowns the whole. The height to the base of the flagstaff is 155 feet (62.484m).

CONTRACT PROCEDURE

A meeting of the Town Hall Committee on 5 November 1877 considered four estimates from Lawson. He was instructed to prepare plans and

specifications and call for four separate tenders. It was resolved that plans for the 'Great Hall' were not to be prepared. Tenders were considered by the committee on 21 February 1878 and a decision was made to proceed with the first and second tenders which covered work designated as follows:

> 1st. The front or principal portion of buildings towards the Octagon in front of great Hall, including Council Chamber, office accommodation Main Staircase and two other subsidiary staircases with vestibule so far as necessary to complete the Front block proper . . .
>
> 2nd To complete Tower and angle domes above parapet line ...'

The lowest tender of £14,893 by William Mercer was accepted. It was for a building with the 'Basement or ground floor being of wrought Port Chalmers stone and superstructure of Brick finished in cement'. On the motion of Councillor Reeves a higher tender of £15,230 was accepted to complete the whole building in stone. [53]

DEVIATIONS

The original design by Lawson was for a two stage project. The 'Great Hall' in the second stage did not proceed, but was eventually added as the Town Hall in 1927. The main entrance to this being in Moray Place was contrary to the original Lawson design, and meant effectively that the original steep internal staircases and vestibules of the original building became obsolete so that the interior could never be used as intended or designed.

---

[53] *Town Hall Committee Minutes* for 21 February 1878 Note: The Town Hall Committee Minutes Book was closed on 10 September 1880.

CURRENT SITUATION

Over the years the building deteriorated and suffered great neglect. By the early 1960s a crisis was reached because newly introduced earthquake codes defined the building, and particularly the clock-tower as an earthquake risk. While in some quarters there were suggestions that the whole structure be demolished, wiser counsels prevailed, although in the process the clock-tower was emasculated. Thanks to a forward looking City Architect, and an enlightened City Council, the building has been restored to its former glory (Fig. 33) and can look forward to many years of service to the City of Dunedin. It does indeed stand, 'as a more worthy memorial', as envisaged by the young Lawson in 1854.

CHAPTER EIGHT

OTAGO BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL 1863-1885

DESIGN CONCEPT

Every project presents a design challenge to an architect. The axiom that form follows function applies particularly in the design of schools. Planning would rank high on the priority list, while siting and aesthetic considerations would have important parts to play.

Schools in Britain tended to be designed in a Tudor or Jacobean style. There were exceptions such as the Royal High School, Edinburgh, by Thomas Hamilton, an example of Classic Revival. Generally, however, the organic nature of school activities demands something less rigid than the restraints imposed on the building form by the classic orders, where the tendency is to design from the outside in, rather than from the inside out. It may be, too, that the original classic form for the old Otago Boys' High School in Tennyson Street had proved less than satisfactory. Whatever the reason, Lawson made the choice of Tudor for his design and it proved to be extremely successful.

Otago Boys' High School has been described by Dr David Walker [54] as having 'touches of Playfair's Donaldson Hospital, Edinburgh' (Fig. 34). William H. Playfair was one of the great classic architects of nineteenth century

[54] Dr David M. Walker, *Historic Buildings and Monuments*, Scottish Development Department, Edinburgh.

Edinburgh, and although he had ventured into non-classical styles, it was without much success until his, 'triumphal performance in the design of Donaldon's Hospital'. It was one of the largest buildings erected in Edinburgh in the nineteenth century and was visible from a great number of different points in the city. The nineteenth century tended to regard it as Playfair's masterpiece.

Built between 1842 and 1851 at a cost of almost £100,000 it would have been known to all. Its design includes four square towers of four storeys at each corner, and in the centre of the south front a set of four octagonal five storeyed towers, each 120 feet high (36.576m). The whole structure is much decorated with buttresses and tall mullioned windows, and is reminiscent of the style which English architects created, late in the sixteenth and early in the seventeenth centuries, in the wake of the impact upon them of the Renaissance. [55]

LAWSON'S DESIGN

There is no suggestion that Lawson followed the design of Donaldon's Hospital, but he must have seen the building and viewing its towers may well have given him ideas for roofscape, such as the towers, pinnacles, and gables as they were incorporated into Otago Boys' High School. At this stage it is well to study briefly the history of the school from its early days in 1863.

---

55 A.J.Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, Edinburgh 1966, p. 281.

OTAGO BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL EARLY DAYS

The first school had a pedimented portico which was supported on eight Roman Doric columns. It was opened in Tennyson Street, Dunedin, on 3 August 1863 (Fig. 35). The site and the building both soon proved to be inadequate. In 1871 a new Girls' School took over the south wing of the building. The Boys' School had suffered long standing problems which were investigated by a Commission of inquiry appointed by the Provincial Council. On 3 July 1873 this commission submitted a report recommending that the girls take over the whole of the existing school while a new school be built for the boys. But problems continued.

SITE

An 1862 Dunedin plan showed a Geological Survey office, Hospital, temporary Lunatic Asylum, Gaol and Benevolent Asylum on a site known as the Arthur Street reserve. It was on 3 November 1877 that a second Commission of inquiry, appointed by the General Assembly of the House of Representatives, tentatively suggested a site for the Otago Boys' High School, on land allocated for the temporary Lunatic Asylum, which had been admitting patients since 1863. [56] By two Government Orders-in-Council dated 8 April and 17 April 1879 the designation of the land occupied by the temporary Lunatic Asylum was amended to provide sites for the Otago Boys' High School and the headmaster's residence.

---

[56] G.J. Griffiths, Alfred Eccles, E.J. McCoy, *Otago Boys' High*, Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin 1983, pp. 27, 36-9.

The Rev. Dr. D.M. Stuart, Minister of Knox Church was the Chairman of the Board of Governors for the Otago Boys' High School, and was thus responsible for the new school building. R.A. Lawson was commissioned to design the new school and it is interesting to speculate on the connection between the two. On 16 May 1871 at a Congregational meeting of Knox Church a decision was taken to hold an architectural competition to design a new church. The winner of this competition was R.A. Lawson, but his scheme was rejected as being too costly. David Ross was appointed as architect - but there was some conflict and unpleasantness and his services were terminated.

Another Building Committee was formed under a new convenor Mr W.N. Blair on 1 April 1873, and this committee commissioned R.A. Lawson to proceed with his original design. It is to be noted that while Lawson's original competition entry was rejected because the estimated cost exceeded £5,000, the final cost for the new church was £18,332.18s.7d. which says much for the strength and personality of the convenor. On 7 November 1876 at the official opening of Knox Church, among other remarks, Mr Blair had this to say:

> '... In admiring this building - which I hold, is the finest piece of architecture in New Zealand - we must not lose sight of the architect, Mr Lawson, to whose tastes it is entirely due. He deserves the thanks not only of the congregation, but of the whole community, for giving the city such a handsome structure ...' [57]

The standing and esteem in which Lawson was held would have put him in a strong position when Board members were considering the selection of an

[57] John Hislop, *History of Knox Church*, J. Wilkie & Co., Dunedin, 1892 p. 76.

architect for Otago Boys' High School.

DELAYS

The construction of the new school began in 1882 but it was not formally opened until 11 February 1885. The contract for £14,819 was signed on 25 July 1882 with a completion date for 1 December 1883. Completion, however, was not possible because the site was still occupied by the asylum. The school board reported that the contractor was being put to great loss and inconvenience. [58]

On 3 May 1884, the Chairman of the Board, Dr Stuart, again reported that instead of having the use of the school in the first quarter of 1884, the delay in moving patients from the old asylum buildings set the building contractor back, so that the school would not be available until the first quarter of 1885. [59]

Finally on 30 April 1885 the chairman was able to report, on a much happier note, that the official opening of the school occurred on 11 February 1885 when everything was found to be satisfactory and perfectly suited for its purpose. [60]

---

58 *New Zealand Education Reports*, for year ended 31 December 1882.

59 ibid., 1883.

60 ibid., 1884.

THE NEW BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL [61] (Fig. 36 &37)

The new building as presented by Lawson is a symmetrical axial composition within a rectangular plan, which has an overall frontage to Arthur Street of 125 feet (38.100m) and overall depth of 175 feet (53.340m). The external perimeter is broken up to provide variety by means of various set backs and projections. The main axis leads from the east (Arthur Street) to the west. At the east end it contains the principal feature of the building, a central square tower, containing main entrance and staircase. At the top of the tower are four angle pinnacles, and its height from finial to ground line is 90 feet (27.432m) or to the level of Arthur Street 120 feet (36.576m). At the west end (rear) of the building there is a bell tower which is a smaller version of the front tower and echoes it in style. The wings, all with steeply pitched gables and pinnacles, disposed on each side of the main axis, in combination with the two towers present a lively and interesting roofscape which can be seen to advantage from many points around the city.

The ground floor contains a central hall size 74 feet (22.555m) by 43 feet (13.106m), surrounded by classrooms. Also included is a rector's private room, waiting room, master's private room and ancillary accommodation. The first floor is taken up with the full height central hall and various classrooms which are disposed around it. A Boys' museum in the upper part of the main tower and a staircase leading to a flat roof with a panoramic view of Dunedin complete the building.

---

61 Otago Witness (Dunedin) 21 February 1885. Note: The newspaper report occupies nine full columns.

SUMMARY

The principal feature of Lawson's front elevation is the central tower, crowned with its open stone balustrade and four angle stone pinnacles. The public entrance through an arched recess in the lower portion of the tower is flanked by octagonal castellated terminals, and is surmounted in the centre by a projecting oriel window which penetrates two storeys and is capped with a castellated parapet.

The site for this building is magnificent and it says much for Lawson's skills that he was able to exploit such sites to their fullest potential, in this case to display Otago Boys' High School to its greatest advantage.

The building is Tudor in style. Originally the style emanated from a revived Roman style in Italy in the 15th century and spread through to France and England where it was grafted on to late Gothic or Perpendicular to form a picturesque combination of square headed, mullioned perpendicular windows, heraldic carving, steeply pitched roofs, gables and pinnacles. [62]

The main superstructure of the school is built of Port chalmers stone, on a base of Leith stone, a hard granite-like stone, while the whole building is embellished with Kakanui (Oamaru) limestone for quoins, window surrounds, turrets and carved decoration.

In all Otago Boys' High School must be regarded as one of Lawson's very successful achievements.

---

62 Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture*,12th Edition, Batsford, London, 1945, p. 352.

CHAPTER NINE

SEACLIFF 'LUNATIC ASYLUM' 1878-1888

SELECTION OF ARCHITECT

The connection between Blair and Lawson has been referred to in Chapter Eight and there seems to be little doubt that Blair was the prime mover in the appointment of Lawson for the Seacliff commission. Blair himself has an impressive record. In Edinburgh he was employed in the office of Sir Thomas Bouch, the constructor of the Tay Bridge. Later in New Zealand, he was appointed district engineer in the Public Works Department and was actively engaged in railway development. By 1878 he had become engineer-in-charge of the Middle Island. [63]

Public Works Department policy was that for any building of magnitude a private architect should be employed, and accordingly with regard to Seacliff, Blair had been in communication with the Minister for Public Works who authorised him to communicate with Lawson. Blair then held a conference with Lawson, "at which we practically arranged the whole matter." After this he wrote to Lawson formally, to which Lawson replied on 17 July 1878. [64]

---

63 Blair, William Newsham (1840-91), *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, 1940.

64 *Inquiry into Condition of Seacliff Lunatic Asylum Building*, p. 21. Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly, Wellington, 1888.

ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

The Seacliff Asylum was to accommodate 500 patients and a staff of fifty and was to include a great hall. The provision of such an institution with all the ancillary facilities required was an enormous undertaking. The site at Brinn's Point, north of Port Chalmers had already been allocated. The architect would need to seek sources for inspiration.

BUILDINGS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH IN NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITAIN

It is reasonable to assume that Lawson would look to Britain, where changes in attitude were taking place. Since the enlightenment in the 18th century, doctors had been advocating greater attention to cleanliness and there was a feeling that the treatment of detainees, whether lunatics or prisoners should be more humane. Such ideas were brought more and more to the attention of the public from the 1820s onwards. The first outcome of reform movements was the Poor Law reform of 1834, which created the system of workhouses. At the same time there were attempts to humanize lunatic asylums and prisons, and in 1848 came the Health of Towns Act. [65]

Workhouses and asylums, hospitals, barracks and prisons had the same distinctive functional requirements, buildings in which large numbers of people, sometimes over a thousand, lived, ate, worked. The main planning principle was of separation of functions. For economy and convenience, facilties such as wash-houses and kitchens were normally placed in a central position. The most ornate part of the institution was the chapel, often

---

65 Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, Thames & Hudson, London,1978, p.109.

in a Gothic style. Next in order of importance came the central entrance coupled with the administration block. Larger establishments were often given an ornate clock tower. [66]

In the 1840s there was a widespread preference for a vague Tudor or Elizabethan style with gables and stone-mullioned windows. There was maximum separation and even isolation of the different kinds of inmates and it was generally thought desirable to accommodate "pauper lunatics" in special institutions. As in the case of workhouses and hospitals, the arrangement with separate wings at right angles seemed the most satisfactory. [67]

SEACLIFF DESIGN CONCEPT

Seacliff is said to be similar to a plan used for the Norfolk County Asylum, England [68] which underwent a major reconstruction in 1856. [69] The two buildings have something in common: both are designed on a main longitudinal axis and have central administrative blocks with side wings at right angles. The Norfolk Asylum measured approximately 520 feet in length with side wings of 200 feet, (Fig. 38) while Seacliff was 570 feet long with side wings of 228 feet (Fig. 39). A building which Lawson may have been acquainted with was the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh. It was designed by David Bryce in the Scottish Baronial style. The foundation stone was laid in

66 ibid. p. 110.

67 ibid.

68 Frank Tod, *The History of Seacliff, Dunedin*, 1970, p. 24 Hardwicke Knight & Niel Wales, *Buildings of Dunedin*, McIndoe, Dunedin, 1988, p. 147.

69 County Archivist, Norfolk Record office, Central Library, Norwich, England. Report by D.G. Thomson M.D. Medical Superintendent, 1903, pp. 2-3.

1870 and the formal opening took place on 29 October 1879. It has round towers, a central block with a clock tower and stepped gables, but the plan form is quite different from either Norfolk Asylum or Seacliff as it consists of a series of linked pavilions. (Fig. 40) In any case Lawson would be aware of trends in institutional design for he had been involved with the Benevolent Institution in Dunedin some years earlier, and publications such as 'The Builder' would have brought him up to date with contemporary thinking in Britain.

There can be no doubt as to the style for Seacliff because Lawson himself told the Commission of inquiry on 27 February 1888 that he had deliberately chosen the 'Scotch Baronial' because he thought it extremely suitable, and that while it could be erected in the plainest possible manner, it had a boldness of effect suited to its purpose in every respect. [70]

ARCHITECT'S TIMETABLE

In the short space of about thirteen months from July-August 1878 when Lawson received formal approval to proceed, until the contract date of 11 September 1879, he was to design an institution of magnitude. (Figs, 41, 42, 43, 44) To do this he had to consult with the Medical and Public Works authorities and receive their approvals at all stages, produce all the working drawings and specifications and call for tenders from suitable contractors. While this was going on he was also deeply involved with another major project the Town Hall, Dunedin, so that he must have been working under tremendous pressure. So far, so good but work had not long started when

[70] *Commission of inquiry*, p. 47.

trouble struck.

SITE INSTABILITY

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

In 1875 Dr Edward Hulme reported to the Provincial Council and a decision was made that a reserve of fine land at Brinn's Point, north of Port Chalmers should be devoted to a permanent lunatic asylum. Other sites including high table land in the Wakari district and at Tokomairiro (Milton) had been considered, but the existence of a reserve at Seacliff settled the matter. [71]

On 11 September 1879 the contract for the Seacliff Asylum commenced.

In 1879 a temporary wooden building to accommodate sixty male patients and staff was completed. Its location was above the site for the new permanent building and a report by the Inspector-general of Mental Hospitals for 1879 gave the first hint of troubles to come. "The site on which the temporary building has been placed has, unfortunately, not proved as good as it seemed. Great trouble has been caused by the continual slipping downwards of a bank in the rear of its north wing, which has at last got seriously injured, the concrete walls on which it rests having been partially pushed from underneath it. The engineer in charge is causing a series of deep drains to be made, so as to stop further slipping, and piles are being substituted for the damaged concrete. It appears that over a large area in this district the ground frequently turns out to be of the same treacherous nature as this piece

[71] Frank Tod, *The History of Seacliff*, Dunedin, 1970, p.18.

which has given such a disagreeable warning.

Instead, therefore, of commencing to build the central block of the new asylum on the piece of ground already prepared, it would be much better to clear and drain by paid labour eight or ten acres, in order that the nature of the ground may be definitely ascertained, and a thoroughly satisfactory site fixed upon with confidence, and then proceed to erect the whole building without delay. It is to be hoped that, if this precaution be taken, not only a safe foundation will be secured, but also a better aspect than the eastern one, which is stated to be unavoidable, if the building is put exactly on the site which has been chosen. It is an object of great importance that the principal dayrooms should face as nearly north as possible, and it was distinctly settled that they would have at least a north-eastern aspect." [72]

REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

As a result of the report from the Inspector-general of Mental Hospitals the matter was placed before the Legislative Council which then called for a full report from the Director of Geological Survey, Dr. James Hector. This was submitted in June 1880 and is included in full as an Appendix to this thesis.

In general it referred to the unstable nature of the site in geological terms. The new building was described as being founded on a branch cutting on a hillside with a surface slope of about ten degrees. The south wing and central part of the building were built on formation and were thus secure, but the north wing was resting on a surface of basaltic clay deposit and, "was constantly moving forwards with an irrestible strain."

---

[72] Frank Tod, *The History of Seacliff*, Dunedin, 1970, p. 19.

Remedial measures proposed included a system of subsoil drainage, and while Dr Hector conceded that the site for the new asylum was the best that could be got within the reserve, there were nevertheless some serious defects which required investigation. These should be provided against before building work proceeded. In addition to proposals for improving drainage some of his suggestions were quite radical. In essence these were (1) that it was desirable to avoid having the building on excavation sites of different levels; (2) that perhaps the south wing, by means of an irregular addition could be carried in an easterly direction; (3) that if the nature of the site had been known the building might better have been planned to face north with its length up and down the spur built up in successive steps, which would give the frontage a warmer aspect; and (4) that if possible it would be better to postpone the erection of the tower. [73]

Lawson received a copy of this report through Blair with an endorsement from the Minister for Works suggesting the suspension of work at the new building.

LAWSON'S RESPONSE

The first thing to be noted is that the site at Seacliff had been given to Lawson, and by Dr Hector's admission it was the best that could be got within the reserve. The design had been approved with the disposition of its various parts and this included circulation. Lawson as an architect was in a dilemma. It is not suggested that Dr Hector's recommendations were unreasonable in view of the evidence as to the instability of the site, but to

[73] Frank Tod, *The History of Seacliff*, Dunedin, 1970 pp. 20-22.

have implemented them in full would have meant virtually scrapping the original scheme and starting again. Near the end of his reply Lawson said, "I have no objection to preparing fresh plans, but I am still of the opinion, as from the first I understand you also have been, that the arrangment of the building on the site available was the best, taking into view all the requirements of the building, and drainage, etc." [74]

Lawson's response on 29 June 1880 submitted through Blair was a form of compromise. He was prepared to comply with measures for upgraded subsoil drainage, formation, and the provision of a main isolating drain but would not yield to more radical requirements. He was not prepared to cut down the back portion to a uniform level with the front of the building. He was strongly opposed to turning the south wing down the spur to face north. Although he reduced the height of the tower it was designed for observation and surveillance puposes and therefore could not be dispensed with. He did not comply with the request to stop all works.

Almost from the beginning this project was plagued with problems which increased rather than diminished as the contract progressed.

DETERIORATING RELATIONSHIPS

Blair and Lawson had a very close relationship in 1876. It was in November of that year at the official opening of Knox Church that Blair was moved to describe Lawson's abilities in the most glowing terms and it is certain that this warmth continued into 1878 and the early stages of Seacliff. Clouds,

[74] Letter and report from Lawson to Blair dated 29 June 1880. Full text in Appendix.

however, were beginning to appear on the horizon. The Inspector-general of Mental Hospitals in 1879 gave the first hint when he said in his report, "It is an object of great importance that the principal dayrooms should face as nearly north as possible, and it was distinctly settled that they would have at least a north-eastern aspect". In the same strain the Director of Geological Survey in 1880 wrote "... the building might better have been planned to face north with its length up and down the spur built up in successive steps and which would give the frontage a warmer aspect..." These comments give the impression that the layout of the building was not found entirely satisfactory by the medical authorities.

The reponse of Lawson produced several reports in the form of letters to W.N. Blair, Engineer-in-Charge, Middle Island of New Zealand. These letters are dated 23 October 1879, 16 January 1880, 29 June 1880, and 2 February 1886 and he also wrote an Introduction dated 3 December 1887 whose opening paragraph begins:

> "As I find in various quarters a quite erroneous impression exists as to the cause and character of the injury which has been sustained by a portion of the north wing of the Lunatic Asylum buildings at Seacliff, and that persistent efforts have been made to cast blame on myself as the architect of the building, I have felt it my duty in simple self-defence to publish the following letters ..."

In the main Lawson's letters refer to drainage problems as is made clear by his letter dated 2 February, 1886.

> "...I am convinced that there has been an extended movement since I was there last, and I am satisfied that the isolation from back ground and drainage is not complete. I can only say that I am very sorry that this is the case, but cannot blame myself in the matter, seeing that I wrote so strongly on the matter so long ago, "see letters of date October

> 23rd, 1879; January 16th, 1880; and June 29th, 1880." The southern half and central portion is already secured by natural formation[75] and drainage, and as it is my conviction that further trouble awaits the northern portion of the building unless effective steps are taken to prevent movement, ... You may think you have suffered in this whole matter. All I can say is, it is my opinion that I have had the heaviest burden to bear in the same, while feeling thoroughly clear and innocent throughout ..."
>
> R.A. Lawson

To which is added a postscript, "No reply has been received to any of the foregoing letters.

R.A. Lawson

Dunedin 3/12/87 Architect."

W.N.Blair, Engineer-in-Charge, Middle island was the representative for the Minister of Public Works through the Public Works Department. In turn the Minister was answerable to the Legislative Assembly which was facing a growing tide of criticism over Seacliff. Blair was therefore in a very difficult position. He had recommended Lawson for the commission and everything now seemed to be going wrong. Earlier friendship was no doubt giving way to mutual dislike. It is surmised that Blair, feeling he was being unjustly held responsible, made the moves to have a Commission of Inquiry set up.

A WORSENING SITUATION

As the main building was nearing completion, serious structural defects appeared. The woodwork and fittings of windows and doors throughout the establishment showed evidence of "bad material and even worse

---

[75] Dr James Hector, Director Geological Survey in his report of June 1880 stated, "The south wing and central part of the building are built on formation, ..."

workmanship." Grave anxiety was expressed as early as 1883 over continual movement of the foundations in the northern wing. Plaster was constantly falling and alarming noises were heard in the timbers of the roof. [76] Doctor MacGregor, Inspector of Mental Hospitals described the asylum in 1886 as, "Inexpressively dreary and dispiriting," with long narrow dayrooms admitting little sunshine, dormitories with high windows which excluded the view, and poor ablution facilities. [77] A major slip occurred in 1887, all female patients were evacuated from the northern wing, and the building was in such a dangerous condition that plans were under way for the demolition of this portion of the main building. [78] [79]

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

The Commission of Inquiry was officially designated, 1888 NEW ZEALAND, SEACLIFF LUNATIC ASYLUM, REPORT OF THE COMMISSION APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO THE CONDITION OF THE ASYLUM BUILDING. [80] It sat in Dunedin from Monday 6 February 1888 until Thursday 1 March 1888, and the Commissioners held three further meetings on Friday 2 March, Saturday 3 March, and Monday 5 March 1888.

---

[76] Frank Tod, *The History of Seacliff*, Dunedin, 1970, p. 24

[77] Ibid., p. 25

[78] ibid.

[79] It is to be noted that troubles continued to plague Seacliff long after the Commission of Inquiry was held in 1888. In 1942 a serious fire swept through one of the women's wards and 37 patients were burnt to death. By 1945 parts of the building had to be demolished, including the great tower, on account of earth movements which cracked and twisted the structure, and by 1959 little of the main building was left standing. Patients in the meantime were gradually moved to Cherry Farm Hospital, Waikouaiti. [Knight and Wales, *Buildings of Dunedin*, p. 148].

[80] The full report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1888 is held in the Hocken Library, Dunedin.

The Commission comprised three members, Harry Pasley Higginson, Civil Engineer, William Henry Skinner, Esquire, and Benjamin Woodfield Mountfort, Esquire [architect]. Altogether twenty witnesses were called on oath and the findings ran to 183 printed pages.

The preamble gives two main reasons as to why an inquiry was held

(1) Allegations that the building was in an unsatisfactory condition.

(2) That it could become dangerous to the lives of those resident there and unfit for occupation.

The findings [item 1 page 3] were that the building was in an unsatisfactory condition which was partly caused through neglect in draining the site, and partly through defects in its construction.

The Commissioners apportioned blame on the architect for not insisting on proper drainage works being carried out, and blame on the Public Works Department for not paying attention to repeated applications from the architect to deal with drainage problems. In the matter of constructional defects these were laid at the door of the architect.

While it is unnecessary to attempt to analyse in detail the full report, and while the proceedings were often acrimonious with many accusations and refutations, the following list gives an outline of the substance of the complaints against the architect.

Unsatisfactory drainage

Damage to the structure in Block 2 (north wing)

Inadequate footings

Inferior construction of brick walls

Inferior materials and workmanship

Inadequate specifications

General conditions not provided by the architect

Unsatisfactory concrete foundations, and specification for concrete very vague

Angle turrets insecure

Other criticisms involved:

Difference of opinion between the Inspector and the Contractor

Inadequacy and insufficiency of the architect's plans and specifications

Some of the recommendations made by the Commission were quite drastic:

The longitudinal portion of Block 2 to be taken down and re-erected

Iron rods to be placed in the upper hall of the central portion

Turrets to be removed from the main front central gable

Stone staircases to be taken out, and replaced with wooden stairs

The gable to be further secured by strong iron bands connected together by iron tie-bars across the gable

W.N. Blair was called to make an opening statement on 10 February 1888. It was long and detailed and was full of accusations against the architect. [81] Blair claimed this was necessary, because it had been alleged in Parliament and the Press that the Public Works Department was implicated in the matter of drainage to the asylum bulding, and it was one of his main objects

[81] Commission of inquiry, pp. 16-22.

to show that neither the department nor any of its officers were to blame for any mishaps that had occurred.

When called upon to reply Lawson made a strong and spirited defence on his own behalf, much of which has been included as an Appendix to this thesis. One of the most serious aspects of his allegations was that preparation for the case against him had been completed and evidence taken from witnesses without his knowledge, as will be seen from part of a statement he made on 23 February 1888.

> "... I wish now to show the Commissioners that I have been kept totally in the dark as to any defects or supposed deficiencies existing in the Seacliff building up till the meeting of the Commission. There is this remarkable circumstance: that I never knew that there was anything wrong with the building until Mr Blair took it into his head just now to say that there was. Therefore I have been taken completely by surprise in this whole matter by those in the Public Work Department who are responsible for it. For years accusations have appeared from time to time in the public Press of a disquieting nature regarding the Seacliff building. All sorts of accusations have been hinted at, and hurled indiscriminately at all in any way connected with it, until in fact,it had become a sort of by-word and word of offence, and until the name of Seacliff was synonomous with the offence of scamping .... [82]
>
> "... The building is there to speak for itself, and I know it to be the best building of the kind in New Zealand, in spite of the childish tittle-tattle fault-finding there has been about it in one quarter, and the damage done to it through groundslip in another. [83]

In his statement of 27 February 1888, Lawson explained why he chose the 'Scotch Baronial' style (see Appendix). In spite of his defence a fair measure of blame was apportioned to him by the Report of the Commissioners dated 5

---

[82] Commission of Inquiry, p. 106.

[83] ibid., p. 108.

March 1888. He continued to protest by sending a Statement to the Colonial Secretary on 17 April 1888, which by and large rejected and refuted the findings of the Commission. The Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, W.N. Blair sent his own memorandum to the Minister for Public Works on 14 May 1888 [84] and so ended this unhappy saga.

CONCLUSIONS

At this distance in time can any conclusions be reached as to why a project which started with such great promise ended in bitterness and recrimination? Several aspects emerge.

SITE

The site on which Seacliff was built was unstable and remains so to this day. In hindsight it is easy to say another site should have been chosen but at the time it may have been quite impracticable.

THE BUILDING

There may have been some design and planning shortcomings which did not reveal themselves until the building was occupied and in use. A hint of this is contained in a report of the Inspector of Asylums in 1887 when he said that a great deal had been affected in the direction of emptying the gloomy airing - courts at the back of the male side by properly draining them and relieving

---

[84] ibid, pp. 175-183

their gloomy appearance by means of flower pots. [85] Another comment came from a former staff-nurse who said, "I do not think the architect was entirely to blame, for his design was very much like the early prison-like structures built in Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries. Conditions for patients and staff were appalling."

The final word on the building goes to Dr G. Blake-Palmer who wrote in 1972

> "... Many still retain in memory the massive facade of the Seacliff main building, once the largest public building in New Zealand. Beyond all doubt it was impressive, picturesque and a total surprise to those who saw it for the first time. To those who worked in it, however, it had from its inception, no doubt many grave defects. The incredible delays in its fitting out and furnishing, and the poor original lighting prior to 1901, prevented the fuller utilisation of its magnificent recreational hall." [86]

CRITICISMS

The beginning and continuing criticism of Seacliff arose at large from movement in the north wing. It alarmed the staff and patients and resulted in adverse reports which reached the Government. The major disagreements between Blair and Lawson related to drainage and foundation work. While the Government engineer believed that movement was isolated and confined to a small portion of the north wing, the architect considered that the whole site was on the move.

---

[85] Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives of New Zealand 1888. Miscellaneous, Lunatic Asylums of the Colony H-8, p. 4.

[86] *The End of an Era*, Seacliff Hospitals, Final Farewell: G. Blake-Palmer, Wellington, November 1972. Early Settlers Museum, Dunedin.

Posterity may well show that both were victims of circumstances beyond their control. The conclusion seems to be inescapable that the reputation of Lawson was damaged. While the boom years in Otago were undoubtedly over, the main reason for his departure to Melbourne in 1889 appears to be the findings of the Commission of Inquiry.

CHAPTER TEN

MELBOURNE 1889-1900

Before the Seacliff Commission of Inquiry, Lawson, in May 1887 left Dunedin for Wellington to act as a locum tenens for Mr Turnbull architect. According to a newspaper report he returned to Dunedin but finding business far from brisk he removed to Melbourne in 1890. [87]

In March 1890 Lawson entered a design competition for the Commercial Bank, Collins Street, Melbourne. There were some forty entries which as described ranged from Classical, Gothic, Renaissance through to "quaint". The design of the winner was designated Classic and that of the runner up Italian. Lawson's entry was listed No. 25 and was dismissed with the briefest of comments:
" 'Leo' - R.A. Lawson. Decidedly a cement design, characterized by faulty figures and carving." [88] It was courageous of him to have submitted a design in what was obviously a fiercely competitive arena.

By June of the same year Lawson had entered into partnership:

> "Mr FREDERICK WILLIAM GREY, architect, of 144 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, has been joined in the bonds of partnership by Mr.Robert Arthur Lawson, lately of Dunedin, N.Z., and the style of the new firm will be Lawson and Grey, architects.
> Mr Lawson's reputation as an able architect in Dunedin is a very honourable one achieved, and sustained during 25 years'

---

87 Otago Witness (Dunedin) 10 December 1902, 30.

88 The Builder and Contractors' News (Australasia) 22 March 1890, 884.

> practice in that city, where he superintended the erection of many buildings of first importance. No doubt a prosperous career will be open for the new combination." [89]

LOWTHER HALL

The new partnership of Lawson and Grey in 1890 designed a classical style mansion for a wealthy Melbourne brewer, Collier McCracken. Situated at 29 Leslie Road, Essendon the property, originally known as "Earlesbrae Hall", was later re-named "Lowther Hall". (Fig. 45)

The basis of the design is a classical symmetrical facade. The main entrance on the western elevation is entered through an impressive pedimented portico supported on six Corinthian columns which rise through two storeys. Altogether including the return elevations there is a total of sixteen massive columns. The architectural compositon is completed by balustrading at roof level, with balustrading also at first floor level to the front portico. At ground floor level a 12ft wide vestibule and hall leads to a central staircase which is housed in a hall 24ft by 24ft surmounted by an ornamentally glazed dome.

Disposed on the north side, accommodation originally consisted of a drawing room, 30ft by 18ft; dining room, 24ft by 18ft 6in; breakfast-room, 18ft by 16ft and day nursery or bedroom, 18ft by 15ft. On the southern side billiard room, smoking-room, library, side entrance, servants, hall, kitchen, pantries, scullery, storerooms and ancillaries. At first floor level bedrooms, dressing rooms and bathrooms with the principal bedrooms opening on to balconies.

---

89 ibid 14 June 1890, 1128.

The foundation stone was laid on 8 August 1890 when an engraved silver trowel was presented to Mr McCracken on behalf of the contractor W.K. Noble and architects Lawson and Grey. The contract price for the house was £11,000. [90]

1890s

Lowther Hall in 1890 must have given an encouraging boost to the new partnership of Lawson and Grey, but in general the 1890s do not seem to have been particularly fruitful. Under the heading GENERAL CONTRACTS OPEN VICTORIA, a short announcement dated 27 May 1890 appeared for Camberwell, Erection of hotel and shops by architects Lawson and Grey, Melbourne. [91]

In 1892 there was a reference to HEARN'S BUILDINGS, BRUNSWICK, VICTORIA, described as a block of buildings, with Gothic style facades recently completed to the design of Mr R.A. Lawson, 144 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. The client was James Hearn of Essendon, the contractor William Boyne and the contract cost about £7,000. [92]

PRESBYTERIAN ASSEMBLY HALL, MELBOURNE

This project was the result of a design competition won by Lawson in July 1891 and for which he was awarded the first premium of £150. One of the

---

90 The Builder and Contractors' News (Australasia) 16 August 1890, 118.

91 ibid., 23 May 1891, 400.

92 ibid., 22 October 1892, 206.

competition conditions required the building to be designed in an ecclesiastical style to harmonise with the architecture of the neighbouring Scots' Church. Two main quatrefoil beltings in the church were matched up by Lawson in the assembly hall at the same uniform level to facilitate future connecting buildings being merged into one homogeneous structure. [Quatrefoil in Gothic stone tracery produces panels, each being divided by cusps into four leaf-shaped openings.] The accommodation consisted of a main hall with basement under, business offices, committee rooms and ancillaries. Working drawings and specifications were completed by November 1892. [93]

WAREHOUSE FOR MORAN AND CATO, FITZROY, VICTORIA

In 1897 and 1898 Lawson was involved in a sizeable new warehouse project but not in a design capacity. In this scheme the design was prepared by Mr Alexander Rankin of Perth while Lawson was engaged as site architect to call for tenders and supervise the work under construction. A central distributing warehouse combined with administrative offices was to be erected in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria, for Moran and Cato, Merchants. Tenders were called in 1897 and that of George Corlett was accepted in the sum of £6997.

The building in four storeys, had a height from footpath to the line of parapet of 68 feet. There were frontages of 90 feet both to Brunswick Street and Victoria Street. Bluestone was used externally to a height at first floor level with brickwork and cement finishings to the upper storeys. Floors were

[93] ibid., 5 November 1892, 222.

supported on iron columns and steel beams. [94] [95]

Provision was made for a large and increasing volume of traffic required in receiving, storing and distributing goods to numerous branch establishments of the parent company. The building was divided into three fire-proof departments and a considerable portion of the premises was devoted to tea distribution. Machinery for grinding spices was installed, there were three hydraulic lifts and two staircases. Construction was under way in March 1898. [96]

This appears to be one of the last projects on which Lawson was engaged in Melbourne.

MEMORIAL TABLET

One of the later commissions undertaken by Lawson in Melbourne was the design of a Memorial Tablet in 1899.

> "A MEMORIAL tablet, designed by Mr R.A. Lawson, architect, and executed by Mr Hughes, of Bourke-street, Melbourne, has been erected to the memory of the late Rev. Dr Robinson, and was unveiled at the St. Kilda Presbyterian Church last Sunday. The memorial, which is a very beautiful work of art, in decorated Gothic, consists of a marble tablet, surrounded by fine white freestone framing, tastefully carved, and deeply relieved." [97]

---

94 The Building, Engineering and Mining Journal, 10 March 1897, p. 195.

95 ibid., 10 July 1897, p. 195.

96 ibid., 19 March 1898, p. 77.

97 The Building, Engineering, and Mining Journal, 9 September 1899, p. 311.

It was in October 1900 that Lawson returned to Dunedin, as his heart, "was always in New Zealand", and shortly afterwards he entered into partnership with James Louis Salmond. [98]

[98] Otago Witness (Dunedin) 10 December 1902, 30.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE CLOSING YEARS 1900-1902

It was in October 1900 that R.A. Lawson returned to Dunedin, and, although he entered into partnership with Mr J.L. Salmond shortly after his return, he lived a somewhat retired life. He was involved in several schemes such as classrooms for First church (1900); a gentleman's residence at 367 High Street (1900); and proposed alterations to the Presbyterian Church, Alexandra (1901); but the active phase of his professional life was coming to its conclusion. Perhaps it culminated in his election as President of the Otago Society of Architects in 1902.

To the end he took an active and sympathetic interest in social matters, having been for many years a trustee of the Dunedin Savings Bank. He was for some time chairman of directors of the Tramways Company, besides being connected with other financial institutions. In his beliefs he maintained a consistent attitude throughout life. While a young man he recorded in his diary, "May God so direct my steps and regulate my mind", and throughout his life he took an active part in church work. He was elected an elder of First church under the Rev. Dr Burns and was an elder at the time of his death. For many years he was superintendent of First Church Sunday School. On removing to Melbourne he became an elder of St Kilda Prsbyterian Church, under the Rev. Dr Robertson, and, as in Dunedin, took an active part in church affairs. [99]

---

99 Otago Witness (Dunedin) 10 December 1902, 30.

That R.A. Lawson was a very private person is suggested by a newspaper item in 1933:

> "... So little is known to all save his family of Lawson himself that probably thousands in the community are unaware even of the man who enriched the city with its finest buildings ..." [100]

He died, suddenly and unexpectedly, at Pleasant Point, Timaru, on 3 December 1902, and was buried in the Northern Cemetery, Dunedin, on 6 December. The following is recorded at the end of his diary:

> "The Presbyterian Church in Otago, New Zealand, mourns one of its oldest and most beloved and respected elders, Mr R.A. Lawson, who has been gathered to his reward, as a shock of corn, fully ripe. There was an immense concourse of citizens of all creeds and conditions at the funeral in the Northern Cemetery, on Saturday, the 6th inst., and a memorial service was conducted on the following day in First Church by the Rev. James Gibb, the church being crowded, and the service most impressive." [101]

The Memorial Service offers a few glimpses into the life of R.A. Lawson. In his eulogy the Rev. J. Gibb said,

> "... he never saw an unkind look on his face, nor ever heard a harsh word fall from his lips, and that if the measure of the worth of a human life was the happiness occasioned by that life in others, then that of Robert Lawson took a high place ..." [102]

It does seem that Lawson possessed an equable and calm termperament. From the time when, as a young man bound for Australia, he was prepared to take the weekly services aboard ship, there was a consistency in his life

---

[100] Otago Daily Times (Dunedin) 25 November 1933.

[101] Lawson Diary 1854 - insertion at end of diary.

[102] Evening Star (Dunedin) 15 December 1902.

which is summed up in the closing remarks of "DR" in 1902 [103]. Lawson himself claimed to be a man of peace, as we see from some verbal exchanges at the Seacliff Commission of Inquiry on 21 February 1888.

> "Mr Lawson: ... In finishing up this contract Mr Ussher cut off some three items off my account for work done and passed under my certificates. I claim that this money should be paid now to me, with the interest from the date of withholding.
>
> Mr Blair: It was not Mr Ussher. I did it myself.
> Mr Lawson: He was acting, I presume, on behalf of the Government, and Mr Blair should have been prepared to see justice done to me. However, the fact remains that these three items were cut off unjustly. They were struck off my account when I sent it in, and they remain unpaid to this hour.
>
> Mr Blair: Why did you not protest?
> Mr Lawson: I did protest. I am a man of peace, and do not go to extremes if I can avoid it at all. However, I shall say no more on that point ..." [104]

Again from the Rev. J. Gibb:

> "... His work had not always been as highly appreciated by his fellow citizens as it deserved .... The late Mr Lawson lacked the necessary environment for the full fruition of his powers. He never had the means at his disposal to show the extent of his capabilities. This, a continual disappointment, was nevertheless borne with the same wonderful equanimity with characterised him amidst all his troubles." [105]

Finally, in the back of Lawson's diary of 1854 the following tribute appears from a member of the St Kilda Presbyterian Church, Melbourne. "D.R." visited Dunedin in December 1902.

---

[103] Lawson Diary 1854 - insertion at end of diary.

[104] Commission of Inquiry, 21 February 1888, p 105.

[105] Evening Star (Dunedin) 15 December 1902.

"Mr R.A. Lawson - One of my thoughts in visiting New Zealand was that I would have an opportunity of renewing my fellowship with our old friend and elder, Mr Lawson. I have never ceased to regret his leaving, and thought how pleasant it would be in a strange land to see his dear face again. But the first news I got when we arrived on the 8th of December was that he had finished his pilgrimage there a few days before. And it was such a finishing as I thought he would have chosen: sudden and painless, in the morning, when he had read the Book. He was very dear and memorable to many of us: so simple, so pure, so sympathetic, so brave, with a face that spoke of fellowship with the Master. We are better because we knew him. We are sorry that we shall see his face no more. The Lord comfort his wife; and may their children follow after. D.R." [106]

[106] Diary of R.A. Lawson - insert at back.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The professional life of R.A. Lawson went through a number of distinctive and readily definable stages.

1. The early formative years in Fifeshire, where he received his education and grounding in the Scottish Presbyterian faith.

2. The opening up of the wider world of architecture in Perth and Edinburgh. Apart from the visible effects of the "Queen City", contact with such an influential Gothic architect as James Gillespie Graham, and, through him, an introduction to that greatest of all Gothic Revivalists A.W.N. Pugin, must have inspired the young man. Not only Gothic, however, for this versatility led him to design in Scottish Baronial, Tudor, Classical and Italianate styles as his career progressed. We do not know what decided him to travel to the other side of the world, for he does not tell us. Once aboard the "Tongataboo" the definitive break had been made, and in those days the chances of turning back would have been remote.

3. The period spent in Victoria was the most turbulent time in its history, but not without its rewards. When he won the architectural competition for the First Church of Otago, Lawson had reached the

turning point of his career which launched him, in 1862, into a new life in Dunedin.

4. The next phase covering the period 1862 to 1888 proved to be the culmination, but also the greatest disappointment. Even the excitement over First Church must have been tempered, for the design and development eventually extended over many years. Other projects in this period have already been touched on. It was Seacliff, the greatest achievement, which was to become the most damaging.

5. The years in Melbourne from 1889 to 1900 were not without note architecturally, but the creative, rewarding phase had passed.

6. The final two years in Dunedin were probably spent in comparative peace and tranquillity.

CONCLUSION

It is unfair to try to assess Lawson's influence in an Australasian context. When he was first in Victoria he was young, unknown, and the whole area was in a continual state of flux and upheaval. The spectacular growth of Melbourne had attracted a flood of architects from Australia and overseas. In the second sojourn from 1889 to 1900 the great names of Blacket, Wardell, Reed, Clark, Purchas, Knight, Hunt and many others dominated the scene to such an extent that it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to have made a mark.

It is in the South Island of New Zealand that Lawson is better known and takes his due place. His name is linked to those of Mountfort and Armson, the three forming an outstanding trio of architects, in Victorian New Zealand.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Lawson, Robert Arthur, Diary 13 July - 2 November, 1854, Hocken Library, Archives.

North East Fife District Council, Cupar, Fife, Scotland.

Historical Monuments (Scotland) Commission, Edinburgh.

Historic Buildings and Monuments, Scottish Development Department, Edinburgh.

Otago Witness (Dunedin) 25 January - 29 March 1862, 5 April, 24 May 1862, 7 February 1863, 12 September 1874, 21 February 1885, 10 December 1902.

Daily Telegraph (Dunedin) 19 August 1863, 6 February 1864.

Oamaru Times (Oamaru) 21 February 1871.

Town Hall Committee, Dunedin City Council, Minutes 27 Nov. 1876; 26 Jan. 1877, 13 June, 27 July.1877, 6 Sept. 1877, 17 Sept. 1877, 21 Feb. 1878, 10 Sept. 1880.

Otago Daily Times (Dunedin) 31 January 1877, 15 Nov. 1989, 25 Nov. 1933, 21 Jan. 1978, Evening Star (Dunedin) 15 Dec, 1902.

New Zealand Education Reports, 1882, 1883, 1884.

New Zealand. Inquiry into Condition of Seacliff Lunatic Asylum Building, 1888. Deputy Governor James Prendergast, Wellington, Government Printer, 1888. Appendix H-8.

County Archivist, Norfolk Record Office, Central Library, Norwich, England.

The Builder and Contractors' News (Australasia) 22 Mar, 14 Jun, 16 Aug 1890, 22 Oct, 5 Nov 1892.

The Building, Engineering & Mining Journal (Australia) 10 Mar, 10 Jul 1897, 19 Mar. 1898, 9 Sept. 1899.

Blair, William Newsham (1840-91) Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, 1940.

Blake-Palmer, G. The End of an Era, Seacliff Hospital, Final Farewell, Wellington, 1972.

Briggs, Asa, *Victorian Cities*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968.

Brocklebank, N. & Greenaway, R., *Oamaru*, John McIndoe, Dunedin, 1979.

Burchell, L., *Victorian Schools*; A Study in Colonial Government Architecture, 1837-1900, Melbourne University Press, 1980.

Centennial Booklet, Bank of New South Wales, 1876-1976. Wellington, 1976.

Colvin, Howard, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*, 1600-1840, London.

Dixon, R. & Muthesius, S. *Victorian Architecture*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1978.

Fletcher, Sir Banister, *A History of Architecture,* 1896, 12th ed. Batsford, London, 1945.

Freeland, J.M. *Architecture in Australia*, F.W. Cheshire Publishing Pty., Ltd., Melbourne, 1968.

Galer, Lois, *Houses and Homes*, Allied Press Ltd., Dunedin, 1981.

Gibbs, James, *Rules for Drawing the several parts of Architecture* (1732) Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., English Universities Press, London, 1947.

Greenhalgh, M. *The Classical Tradition in Art* , Duckworth, London, 1978.

Griffiths G.J., Eccles, A., McCoy, E.J., *Otago Boys' High,* Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin, 1983.

Hislop, John, *History of Knox Church,* J. Wilkie & Co., Dunedin, 1892.

Kerr, Robert, *The Gentleman's House,* London, 1871.

Knight H. & Wales, N. *Buildings of Dunedin,* John McIndoe, Dunedin, 1988.

Knight, Hardwicke, *The Ordeal of William Larnach,* Allied Press, Dunedin, 1981.

Lewis, Miles, *The Illustrated Register of the National Estates,* Macmillan, Australia, 1981. Architecture from Colonial Origins.

McDonald K.C. City of Dunedin, *A Century of Civic Enterprise,* Dunedin City Council, Dunedin, 1965.

Salmond, Arthur, L. *First Church of Otago*, Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin, 1983.

Souvenir Booklet, Park's High Street School, Diamond Jubilee, 1864-1924.

Stacpoole, John, *Colonial Architecture in New Zealand*, A.H. & A.W. Reed, Wellington, 1976.

Summerson, Sir John, *The Classical Language of Architecture,* Thames & Hudson, London 1988.

The Journal of George Hepburn, Coulls Somerville Wilkie Ltd., Dunedin, 1934.

Tod, Frank, *The History of Seacliff*, Dunedin, 1970.

Wynn, Graeme, Historical News No. 34, Whitcoulls, March 1977. Derivative Symbolism; Urban Architecture of the Victorian Period in New Zealand.

Youngson, A.J. *The Making of Classical Edinburgh*, Edinburgh 1966.

APPENDIX I

ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION NOTICE 1877

NEW MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

The following particulars re the proposed Town Hall, Municipal offices, Market buildings, and central Fire Brigade Station will doubtless be of general interest.

The City Council of Dunedin is prepared to receive designs for new Municipal Buildings proposed to be erected on the site fronting the Octagon and Moray Place respectively. The designs are to be prepared so that the block of buildings, when complete, shall include a Town Hall for the city, Municipal Offices for the various Corporation Departments, the requisite accommodation for the Central Fire Brigade Station, and a suitable structure for the Central Market, the market buildings embracing the whole of the remaining area of the ground left available.

No suggestions are offered as to the style of the proposed buildings, nor are any restrictions imposed on competitors in this respect, economy, and suitability to the climate, and to the various purposes to which the buildings are to be devoted, being had in view. It is, however, fully to be understood that the designs shall be so prepared that when all the contemplated parts of the building are erected they shall together form a complete and uniform whole, at a total cost not exceeding £30,000.

As it is intended to reserve rights of way or entrances about 12 or 14 feet wide on the east and west sides of the building for the purpose of giving access from the Octagon and preventing the building from being built against on those sides, it will consequently be necessary to have four architectural fronts or facades, although the east and west fronts may be treated less ornamentally than the others. At the present time it is only proposed to erect that portion of the building required for municipal offices. The amount to be so expended is £7,000, and the designs are to be particularly prepared with this object in view.

Designs are to be delivered, addressed to the Town Clerk, at the Council Chambers, Dunedin, by noon of 1st day of June, 1877. The premiums offered are:- For the first approved design, £200; for the second, £100; and for the third, £50. The first and second premiated designs to become the property of the Council. The Council does not bind itself to employ the successful competitor to carry out the work.

The portion of the building which it is proposed to erect immediately comprises seven rooms for the City Surveyor's Department, three for the Gas Engineer, a dwelling for the Messenger, and other conveniences on the ground floor; nine rooms for the Town Clerk's Department, and three for the City Treasurer, on the first floor; and a Council Chamber, 53 feet by 25 feet, Mayor's room, Mayor's office, lady's reception room, and library and other conveniences, on the second floor. The remainder of the accommodation required to complete the whole building includes a great hall 120 feet by 50 feet, with heights to crown of ceiling about 50 feet, and to seat (including ground floor and galleries) about 2,000; clock and observation tower, with

look-out for night watchman, tea rooms and other conveniences; Fire Brigade premises, market buildings, and outbuildings." [107]

[107] Otago Daily Times (Dunedin) 31 January 1877, 2.

APPENDIX II

Report from the Director of Geological Survey, Doctor James Hector, June 1880.

The foundation rocks of the district, are: (a) clay marls; (b) green tufaceous sandstone; (c) argillaceous conglomerate of quartz pebbles; (d) calcareous or argillaceous sandstone. These beds dip to the SSE or directly seaward at 20 degrees.

The denuded surface of these beds has been formerly covered by a volcanic formation, of basaltic floes and tufaceous deposits; but those having undergone decomposition in situ are now represented by heavy beds, of clay and boulders, the latter being the undecomposed kernels of basaltic rock. Such clay deposits expand and contract with wet and dry weather respectively, and if resting on a slope must constantly move down-hill, as formerly explained, and of which Mr Cox mentions an instance in proof, in the cutting at the back of the temporary building. The latter beds, cover most of the surface of the reserve, but in places they are very shallow, and the basement formation, appears to be close to the surface. This is particularly the case on the western side of the ridge or spur on which the sites both of the temporary and permanent buildings have been chosen.

This building is founded in a branch cutting on a hillside, which has a surface slope of about 10 degrees.

The south wing and central part of the building are built on formation, but the north wing rests on a surface of the basaltic clay deposit.

The result is that, while the south part of the building stands secure, the north wing - or, rather, the northern part of it - is constantly moving forwards with an irresistible strain.

As this movement is dependent on the absorption of water by the clay on which the building stands, there is no doubt that its operation may be greatly retarded, by a proper system of subsoil drainage to intercept the surface or soakage water. This is being done and the bulged and cracked concrete walls are being replaced. Spur buttresses are also being placed on the lower side, with a view of giving support, but it is obvious that unless these are carried down into formation, they can be of no substantial service.

The position of this site is analogous to that of the temporary bulding, but the spur is wider and flatter, and the formation appears to present a larger area at the surface in front of the building, thus giving material support in that direction. Mr Cox, who thoroughly examined the reserve, and had a better opportunity of forming an opinion than I had, considers it the best site that could be got within the reserve. But it has some serious defects which should be thoroughly investigated and provided against before the building is proceeded with.

The south end of the main building will stand on formation as in the former case but with a further complication, owing to a stratum of greensand, which occurs interstratified with the clay marls and carries water, and will require

special arrangements for drainage.

The north end of the building and part of the foundation of the central portion already laid are on the unstable formation, the movement of which, owing to the shape of the under surface, will be towards the NE; and unless the foundations are carried through to the solid, or otherwise completely isolated from the general mass of formation on the hillside, there is the danger that however strongly they may be laid the northern end of the building will be insecure.

There is to be a back portion of the building on a different level, about 10 feet above that of the front part, the foundation for which was only commenced, but to all appearances it will be also partly on the unstable formation.

Another feature in the building which bears on the question of the stability of foundation, is the lofty tower which is part of the plan, and the foundation of which will be right on the outcrop of the bed of greensand, previously referred to as a water-bearing bed, and therefore a weak point.

The true nature of the subsoil formation should be thoroughly ascertained by sinking a pit somewhere towards the north-east part of the central building now in progress. If it is found that the clay and boulder formation is of moderate thickness, the building should be underpinned round the north-east and north-west corners, and on the north face; and the deep trench excavation for this purpose would also facilitate the thorough drainage of the foundation.

The object sought in this suggestion is to cut off the foundation from surrounding clay formation, and isolate it from the effect of any motion to which that formation is subject.

The trench and drain would, of course, be filled with coarse rubble.

If it is possible now to alter the plans, I think it would be desirable to avoid having the building on excavation sites of different levels. If the complete excavation at the back would be too expensive, might not the south wing be carried out by an irregular addition in an easterly direction down that part of the spur which is more likely to afford secure foundation. In fact, if the nature of the site had been known in time, the building might better have been planned to stand facing north, with its length up and down the spur, building up the foundation on to the solid in successive steps. By this means the frontage would have been to the warmer aspect, heavy cuttings would be avoided, and the building might be indefinitely enlarged as required.

I do not know if the tower is an essential or only an architectural part of the structure, but it must add greatly to the cost, besides, from the enormous weight concentrated on a small surface and that being an insecure spot, it must endanger the foundations if they are otherwise shaky. It might be worth consideration if it would not be better to postpone the erection of the tower to its full height for the present, and until it has been ascertained from experience that the foundations of the buldings do not settle.

JAMES HECTOR

APPENDIX III

Letter and Report from R.A. Lawson to W.N. Blair, 29 June 1880

Re Seacliff Lunatic Asylum

Dunedin, June

29th, 1880

W.N. BLAIR, ESQ.,

Engineer-in-Charge, Middle Island, New Zealand.

SIR, - I have the honour to acknowledge your memo. of 23rd inst., numbered as on margin, with the accompanying reports of Dr Hector, and correspondence also endorsement from the Minister of Works suggesting that work at the New Building should be suspended meanwhile. With reference to the whole matters referred to I have the honour to report as under:-

1st. Regarding the slip of ground which took place at the Temporary Building I have to state that it is now entirely stopped, and has been for several months, the building having been placed back in its original position, in which position it was when Dr Hector, yourself, Mr Hume and myself visited the site on the 2nd inst. On the slip taking place a drain was cut down to the bedrock, and partially into the same which had the effect of isolating the ground occupied by the building and draining it, and so causing an entire stoppage of the slip, so far as it affects the building.

So far back as October 23rd, 1879, I requested that this work of drainage should be attended to, the following being from my communication of that

date:-

"My attention having been called to the moving of foundations at the Temporary Lunatic Asylum Buildings, Seacliff, lately erected, I have to state that it is urgently necessary, in order to prevent, if possible, further damage to the building, that drainage trenches be sunk behind the same, so as to intercept the undercurrent of ground drainage which is causing the movement referred to."

At that time drainage clearance and formation works were carried on by the labour of patients under direction of an Inspector - this being the system directed by the then Minister of Works - and it was months before the necessary drainage was accomplished, and then, ultimately, other labour had to be employed; but, through this delay, the greater part of the damage was accomplished. I would point out, also, that the site of the Temporary Building is all on one uniform slope, and that the ground also, in front as well as behind, has the same continuous gradient; whereas the site for the Permanent Buildings occupies comparatively a level plateau, having spurs or ridges spreading in front of same to a considerable extent, the ground having also a back fall from line of proposed building.

2nd. Having special reference to site of Permanent Building - It was selected after very careful survey and consideration of all requirements, and it is satisfactory to know that Dr Hector reports that Mr Cox, who thoroughly examined the reserve, consideres it "the best site that could be got within the reserve." With regard to the steps intended to be taken to secure this site from any similar occurrence as that which took place at the temporary site - although, from its different position and structure, I do not think it liable to same - on January 16th, 1880, I sent the following letter to the Public Works

Office:-

Re Seacliff Lunatic Asylum Buildings

W.N.BLAIR ESQ.,

Engineer-in-Charge, Middle Island New Zealand.

SIR - I have again to draw attention to the urgent necessity for more speedy action being taken as to the preliminary work at the site of the New Permanent Buildings.

You are aware that through a slip of ground which has taken place where the New Temporary Building is erected, much injury has resulted and may yet result (at this time the drainage had not been completed) and in order to prevent the possibility of such a serious matter occurring at the New Permanent Building the site should be much more widely cleared of timber, and all the excavations made as well as drains inserted, to prevent undercurrents which might cause such slips as those referred to. It was intended that the excavation and levelling of site as well as the clearing of same, was to be done by patients from the Asylum, but it will now be seen by the ample trial of this system, that sufficiently rapid progress cannot be made - in other words, that should it be continued it will be to the hindrance of the works and possibly much more serious results afterwards.

I therefore now request you to be good enough to bring this matter before the Minister of Works, that it may be remedied by making arrangements with the Contractor, under due restrictions, to proceed with these preliminary works with that necessary speed which their urgency calls for.

I have the honour to be, etc, etc,

R.A. LAWSON

Upon this, as I understand, action was taken, which resulted in the clearing and excavation of the site, being let by tender to the present contractor for the building, and although not yet commenced the drainage of the whole area to be occupied by the building was my chief object in writing the letter referred to, and this with the object as stated in Dr Hector's report, part 4 - namely, "To cut off the formation from surrounding clay formation, and isolate it from the effect of any motion to which that formation is subject." [The original letter from Lawson included a sketch which showed a proposed main isolating drain for the full length of the building on the west side, that is, to the rear]

The plan indicates roughly the proposed main isolating drain which has all along been contemplated by me, and, if possible, I would prefer if it could be so constructed as to be an open drain, well sloped on sides as to be rather a good feature in the general formation of the surroundings of the building, but if the depth should render this impracticable, then a tunnel might be driven at parts as might be necessary, but in any case I would carry down the drain so as effectually to intercept the under ground drainage, and so as to be under the level of the deepest foundations of the building as indicated on rough section which gives a general idea of the surface outline, etc., at AB. The part from W to DRAIN on section, gives also a general idea of the slope on which the Temporary Building stands, as compared with the site on which the Permanent Buildings are to be erected, as shown by rough sketch on section. The drains shown on sketch would have a fall both to the north and south, and good facilities are given by the formation of the site for its construction.

With regard to Dr Hector's recommendations - when on site the trenches for the tower were being cut, and I followed out his advice in cutting down the whole area of the tower to a lower level, the portion of green sand which occurred near this point proving only to be an isolated quantity of not more than a few barrow loads, and no flow of water nor indications of such was visible after the rainwater which was then in the trenches was removed. The foundation of tower is now on hard blue clay marl and a solid bed of concrete from this upwards.

A shaft is also being sunk at the N.E. part of the central bulding as suggested by Dr Hector, and as soon as the thickness of clay and boulder formation is found we will be able to know at what cost the under-pinning of walls can be done, and if it should still be considered necessary to have this done also. Although I am inclined to think it would not be requisite if the back main isolating drain is carried out as intended, and as soon as the further extension of the clearing of the ground will enable it to be gone on with. As to altering the plans so as to turn the south wing down the spur and face north, I am distinctly of opinion it would not be advisable nor would it tend to give further stability than that already provided for:- because you will notice that on the plan cross wings of considerable extent are already contemplated to be carried down from the main line of the building in the direction referred to, and the general arrangements of the building would not be so satisfactory in successive steps, as in uniform levels. Then as to cutting down back portion to a uniform level with front, the extent of excavation renders this most unadvisable and the back building would be too much buried and damp. The kitchen wing which is the main back wing is only two storeys in height, in

part only one, and by the present plan is arranged level with the dining-room floor, and the whole of the basement portion of the main central portion of building is used as an open corridor.

The tower is to be the clock tower of the whole building, and also can be used for observation purposes, as it is the only point from which surveillance can be exercised into the various portions of the yards and airing courts. I look upon the tower not as an architectural feature but as a necessity in all such buildings, and the position and foundation of the tower as now carried out is, I consider, the most secure of any one point in the whole area.

I have taken upon me to delay giving immediate orders for the stoppage of the works as a whole, until I hear from you in reply to this, but if the Minister of Works should still think it advisable I shall do so, and in which case please inform me by telegram. I feel it my duty at the same time to point out that by suspending the works, the contractor may have a claim for compensation, and it is chiefly for this reason that I have not given him written notice so far. Also the work now going on does not interfere with anything which may be decided - the only works progressing being levelling up concrete bearings, making of bricks and clearance of site.

The plans as prepared were designed to suit the site, and after surveys and sections of the ground were furnished me from the Public Works Offices. So far as I am concerned, I have no objection to prepare fresh plans, but I am still of opinion, as from the first I understand you also have been, that the arrangement of the building on the site available was the best, taking into view all the requirements of the building, and drainage, etc.

I trust I have been explicit enough in my statements, but if there is any point I have overlooked or have not referred to, I shall be glad to give any further information in my power.

Waiting your further instructions, I remain yours respectfully,

R.A. LAWSON

APPENDIX IV

A portion of Lawson's address to the Commission of Inquiry on 27 February 1888.

"... Now, as to the plans and specifications: I desire especially to point out to the Commissioners that the inquiry is, in a large measure, to ascertain whether the plans and specifications, as prepared by me as Architect, have been faithfully carried out; whether in other words, the damage to the building arises, as in the words of the Commission itself, " from the Architect's plans and specifications not having been adhered to in the execution of the works." Now, it is to be distinctly understood and noted that it is not ideal plans and specifications which are to guide you in this inquiry, but those very same plans and specifications now before you - the very same - not ideal ones. If called upon to-day to prepare others, I trust that I should be able to prepare and place before you far better ones - nay, in looking over them I see many points where I should be able to improve upon them, more especially after having heard the remarks - the judicious remarks, too, in a great many instances - and the criticisms of the gentlemen of the Commission with regard to them. But that is not the point, and I desire respectfully to remind you, gentlemen, that you must shut from your minds those ideal plans that you may have been conceiving in your own minds as to this matter, and which are apt to intrude themselves, and that you are to judge this matter from the plans and specifications before you, and from no other.

As to the design, I chose the Scotch Baronial because, for a large building of the kind, I thought it extremely suitable, and because of the fact that it can be erected in the plainest possible manner, and yet has a boldness of effect suited to its purpose in every respect. I think from end to end of the building there are few mouldings of any kind, and only a touch here and there of anything like ornament introduced; the grouping of the parts of the building and its distinctive style, rather than any other attempt at ornament, conducing to its whole effect, and which effect, I was pleased to learn from the Commissioners themselves when on the ground, was satisfactory and pleasing to them. With regard to the angle turrets which always form a conspicuous feature in the Scotch Baronial style it is evident that Mr Brindley had previously no experience of them as I had, having the privilege of being a Scotchman and educated for my profession chiefly in the queen of cities, old Edinburgh itself, where these angle turrets are to be seen on every hand, and no Scotchman is afraid to walk under them. I never heard any one talk about them as Mr Bridley did when he said he was afraid to walk under them.

I hold in my hand here - although, of course to you, gentlemen, it is superfluous - a speciman in a book published by Robert Kerr, F.R.I.B.A., of London. Here, at page 376, is a sketch of the Scotch Baronial style. It is only a little one, the only one I had at hand, and in it you will see these turrets exactly as they have been produced and built at Seacliff. These turrets are plentifully distributed all over France, Germany and the Continent. You will there see these projecting angle-turrets exactly as they are at Seacliff. And you have also mounted to the roof of the building through the spiral stone staircase of the Seacliff turrets, and you can testify it was safe to do so, for you have got back safe, even though you may not be Scotchmen. As I have

previously stated, I do not profess to have produced at Seacliff a perfect building. I never did produce a perfect building. I am striving for it day after day, and am getting a little nearer to it, but do not look for perfection in that building. If I had to erect it to-day I might put more binding into it, as some have justly remarked, and I think judiciously, and I might introduce here and there a little perfection I did not notice at the time I was getting this into order. I quite admit all that, but I rely upon you, gentlemen, to bear me out in this maintenance, that the building is one which, when thoroughly completed and protected by the isolating cutting, the country will be pleased to look upon, and that, too, in the words of Dr McGregor, the General Superintendent of Lunatic Asylums in New Zealand, when writing to me in reference to it, "with a sober satisfaction"..."

APPENDIX V

LARNACH CASTLE

Lawson was involved with 'Larnach Castle' but there is no consensus as to precisely what his role was. The scheme is therefore not included as one of his confirmed design projects.

The Hon. W.J.M. Larnach C.M.G. was born at "Castle Forbes", Hunters River in New South Wales. Arriving in New Zealand in the 1860's to manage the first Bank of Otago he started work on the 'Castle' first known as the Camp in 1871. In all it was a very elaborate project costing some £125,000 and engaging some 200 workmen. Its time span was about 16 years of which four were spent on the structure and eight on the interior finishing. Suggestions are that Larnach obtained the design from overseas and appointed Lawson to supervise the contract. [108] Later research has failed to determine the exact extent of the participation by Lawson. [109]

---

[108] Otago Daily Times, (Dunedin) 21 January 1978, 30.
Hardwicke Knight, *The Ordeal of William Larnach*, a Synopsis, Allied Press, Dunedin, 1981.

[109] Lois Galer, Historic Places Trust, 22 June 1990.

The specification is by Lawson with the heading as follows:

Specification
of
Work required in the construction
of a Residence at
The Camp
Peninsula
for
W.L.M. Larnach Esq.

Dunedin Nov. 1872 R.A.Lawson [110]
Archt.

A plan contains a tower and spiral staircase [111] and is endorsed as follows:

This is one of the plans referred to in our mutual agreement
R.A. Lawson Nov. 1872
Dick Pugh & Company Roger Riddell & Co.
By William Dick by W. Riddell

Architecturally the design of Larnach Castle is unsatisfactory. The planning is confused and there is conflict between the tower and the strongly horizontal verandahs. It seems unlikely that Lawson would have been responsible for the original design but this must remain a matter for conjecture and is the reason for its omission.

---

[110] *The Ordeal of William Larnach*, p. 34, facsimile.

[111] *The Ordeal of William Larnach*, p. 34, facsimile.

FIG.1. R.A.LAWSON IN 1862

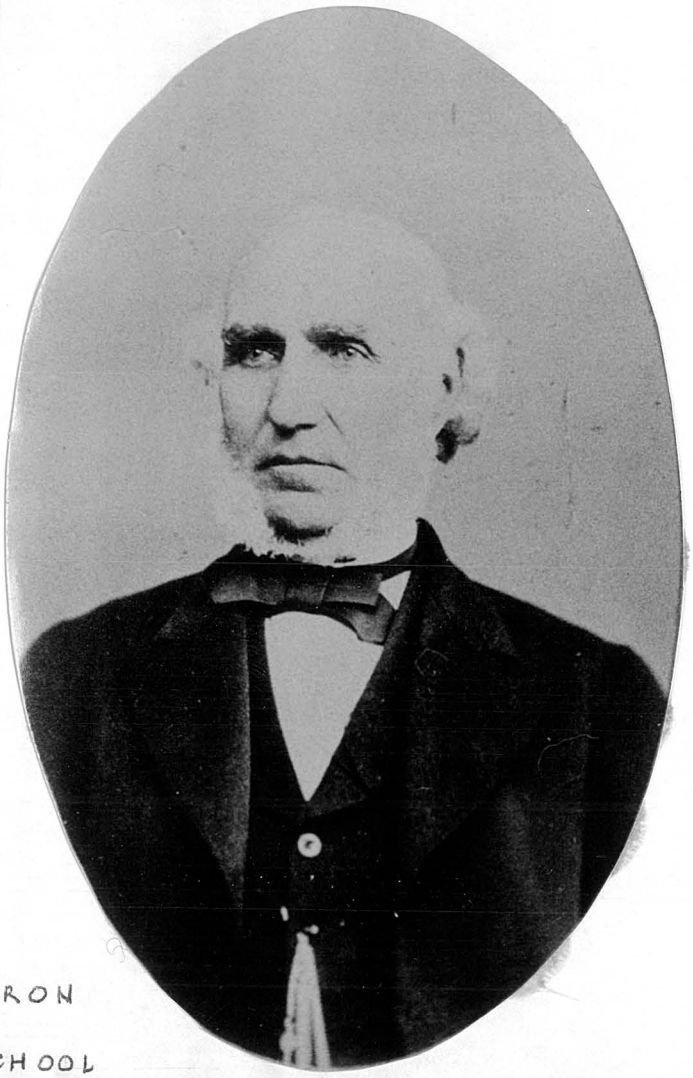


FIG.2. JOHN CAMERON
HEADMASTER
ABDIE PARISH SCHOOL

FIG.3. 'DUNALISTAIR' BY HEITON AND HEITON

FIG. 4. DUNS CASTLE
BY GILLESPIE GRAHAM

FIG. 5. GRAY'S HOSPITAL BY GILLESPIE GRAHAM

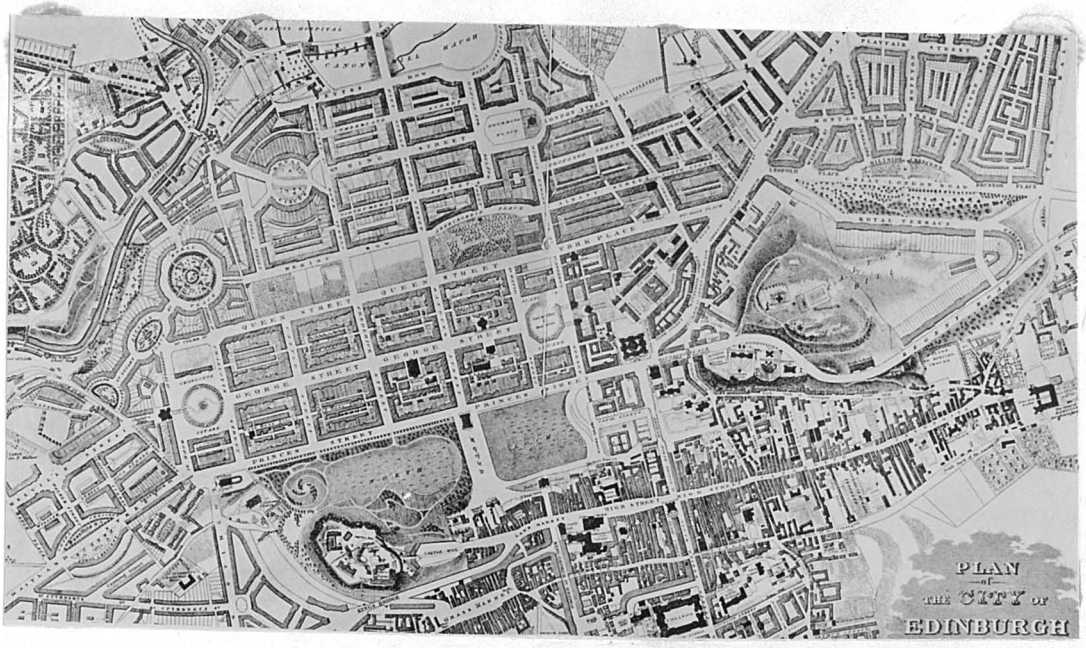


FIG. 6. LAYOUT PLAN, MORAY PLACE, EDINBURGH
BY GILLESPIE GRAHAM

FIG. 7. MORAY PLACE, EDINBURGH
BY GILLESPIE GRAHAM

FIG. 8. LINDORES ABBEY, FRAGMENT OF WALL WITH GATEWAY

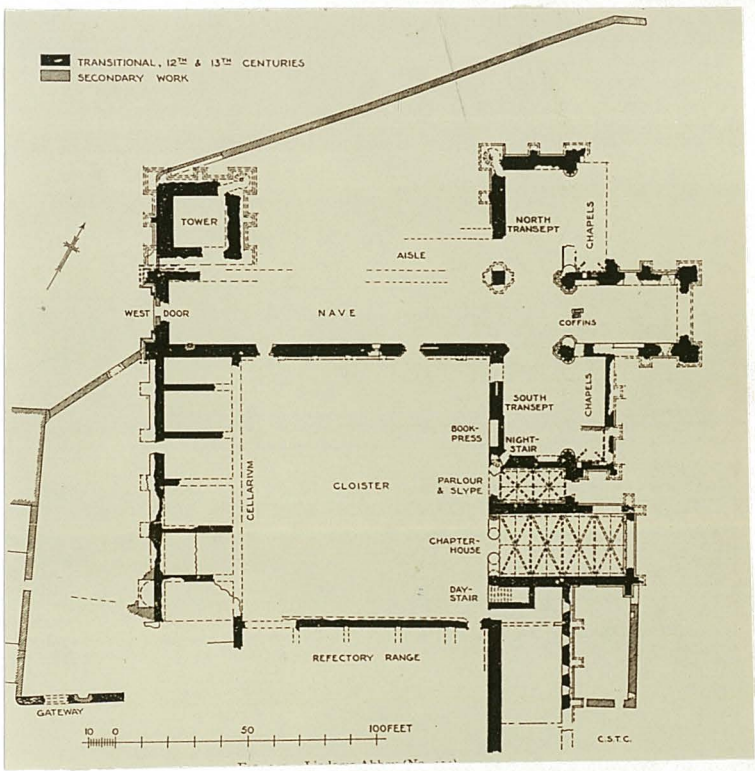


FIG. 9. LINDORES ABBEY, GROUND PLAN

FIG. 10. LINDORES ABBEY, RUIN OF CLOISTER

FIG. 11. THE TOLBOOTH
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
EDINBURGH

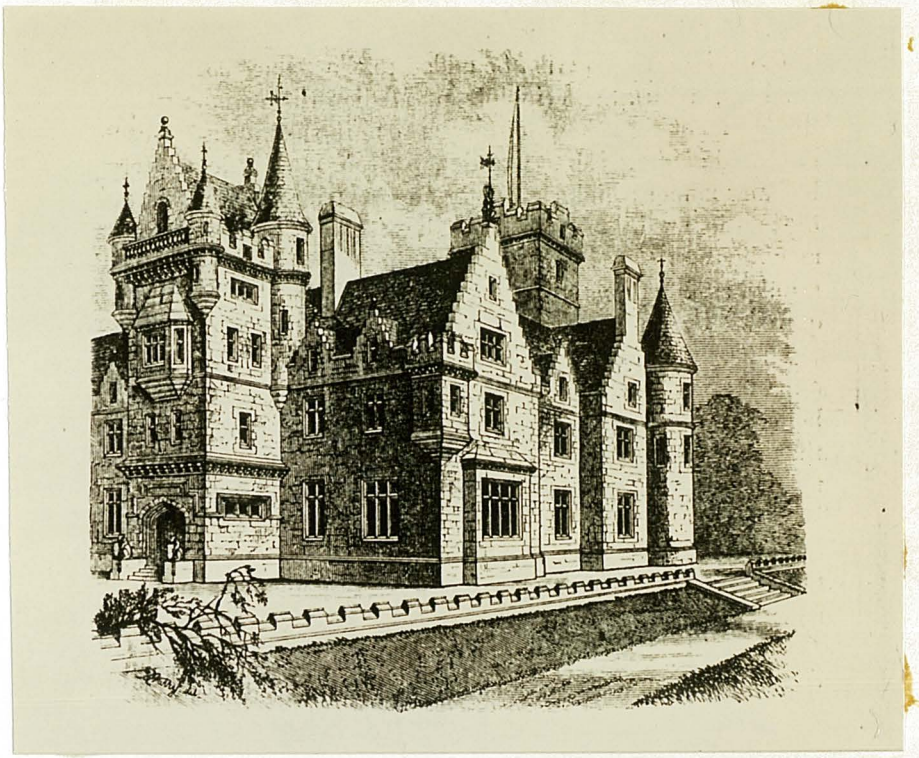


FIG. 12. SCOTTISH BARONIAL STYLE

FIG. 13. DONALDSON'S HOSPITAL, EDINBURGH
BY W. H. PLAYFAIR

FIG. 14. COMMERCIAL BANK OF SCOTLAND BY DAVID RHIND

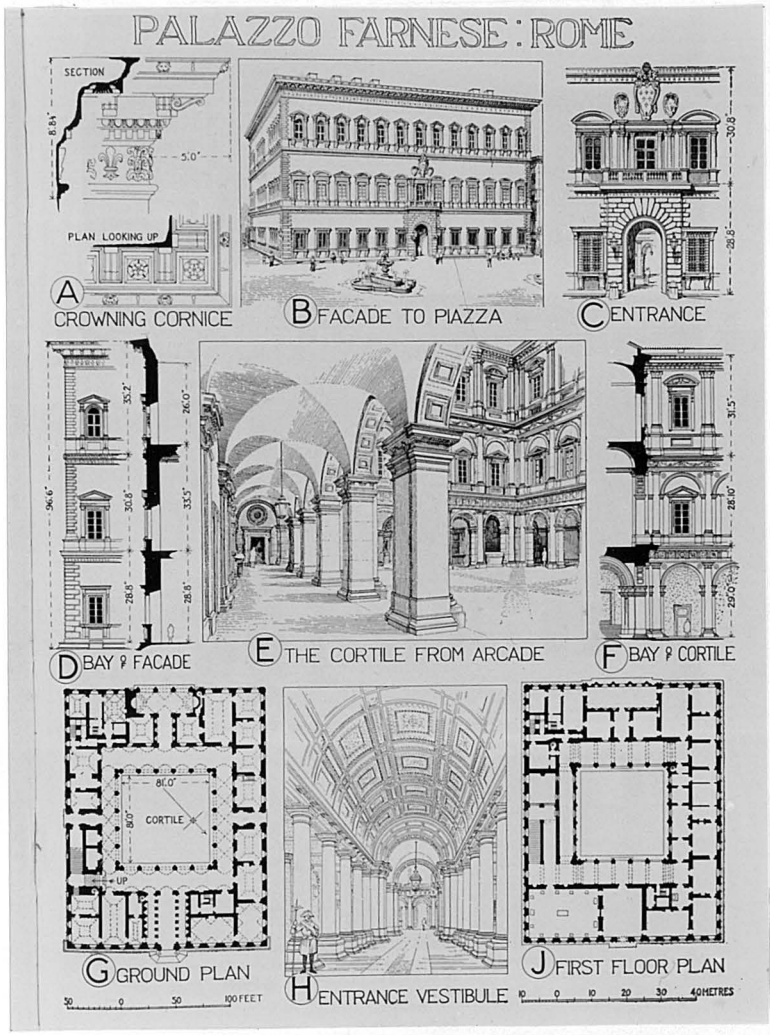


FIG. 15. PALAZZO FARNESE, ROME

FIG. 16. REFORM CLUB, LONDON, BY SIR CHARLES BARRY

FIG. 17. BRITISH LINEN BANK, EDINBURGH
BY DAVID BRYCE

FIG. 18. ROYAL EXCHANGE, LONDON
BY SIR WILLIAM TATE

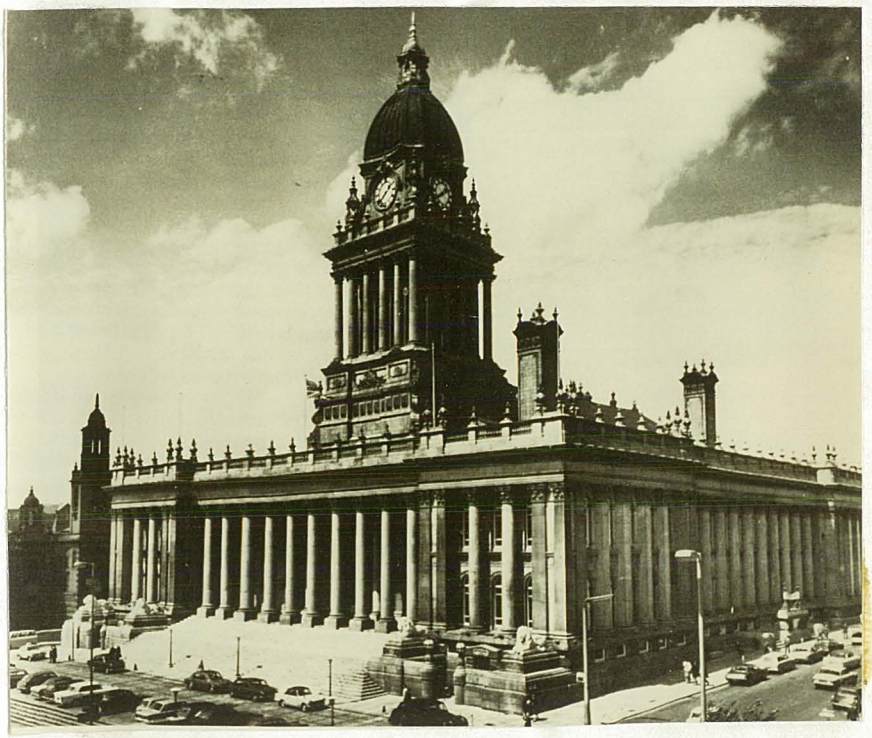


FIG. 19. LEEDS TOWN HALL, BY CUTHBERT BRODRICK

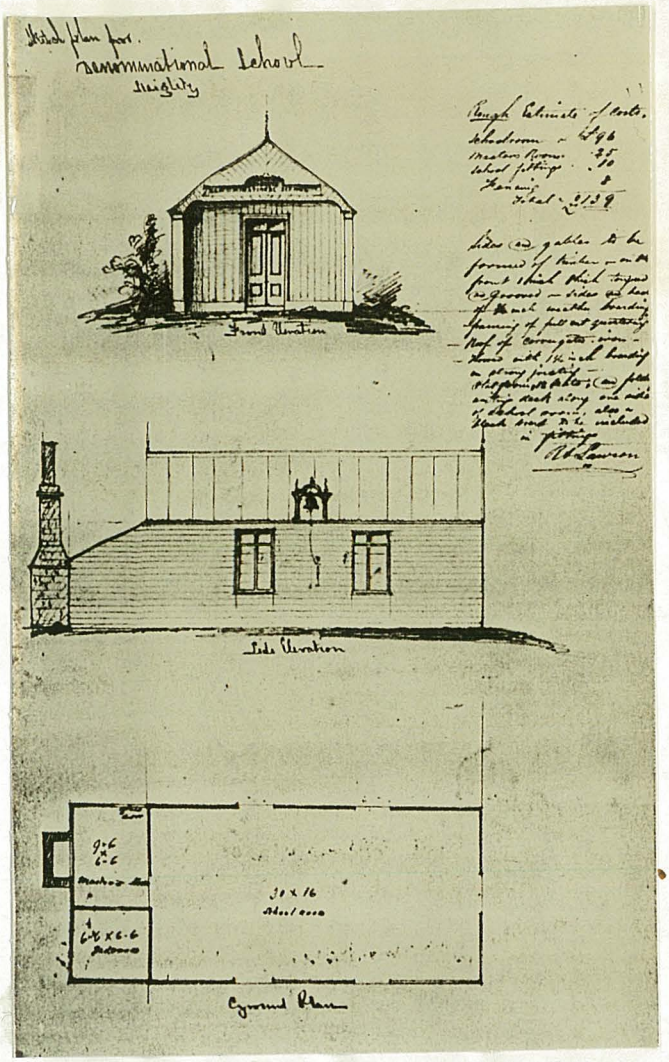


FIG. 20. STEIGLITZ FREE CHURCH SCHOOL
BY R. A. LAWSON

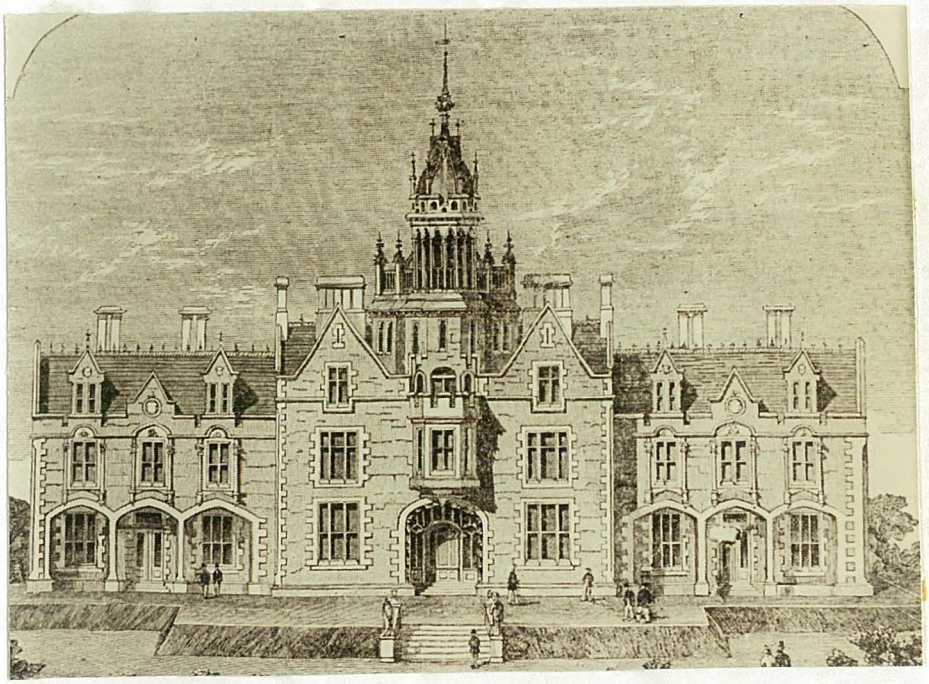


FIG. 21. OTAGO BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION
BY R. A. LAWSON

FIG. 22. OTAGO BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION, AS BUILT BY R.A. LAWSON

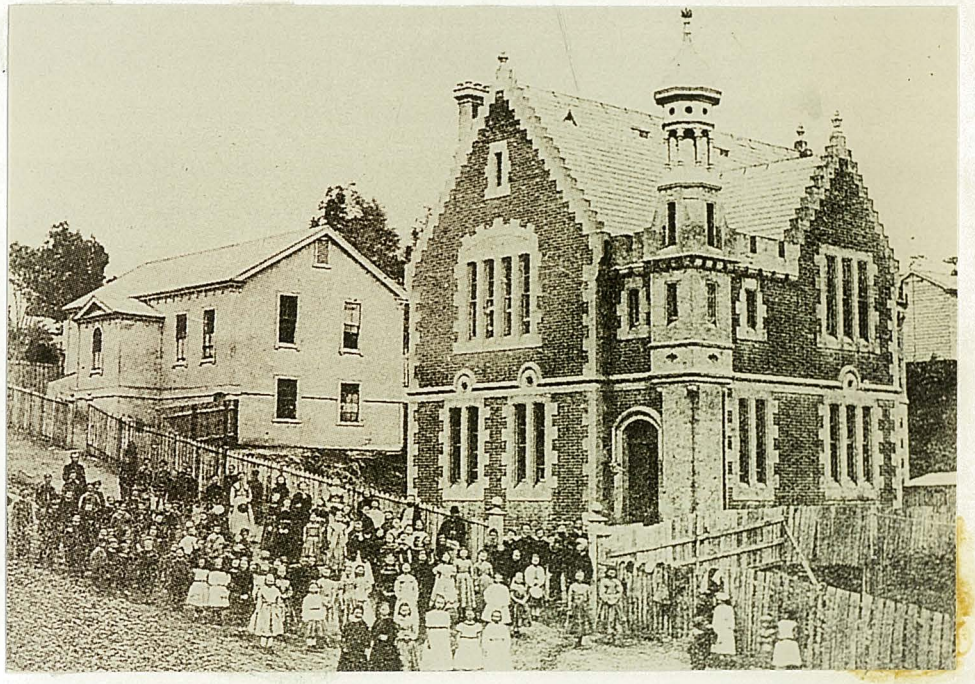


FIG. 23. PARK'S SCHOOL, DUNEDIN, BY R.A. LAWSON

FIG. 24. APARTMENTS 1990, FORMER PARK'S SCHOOL

FIG. 25. 'BROOKLANDS', GOODWOOD, OTAGO, BY R.A. LAWSON

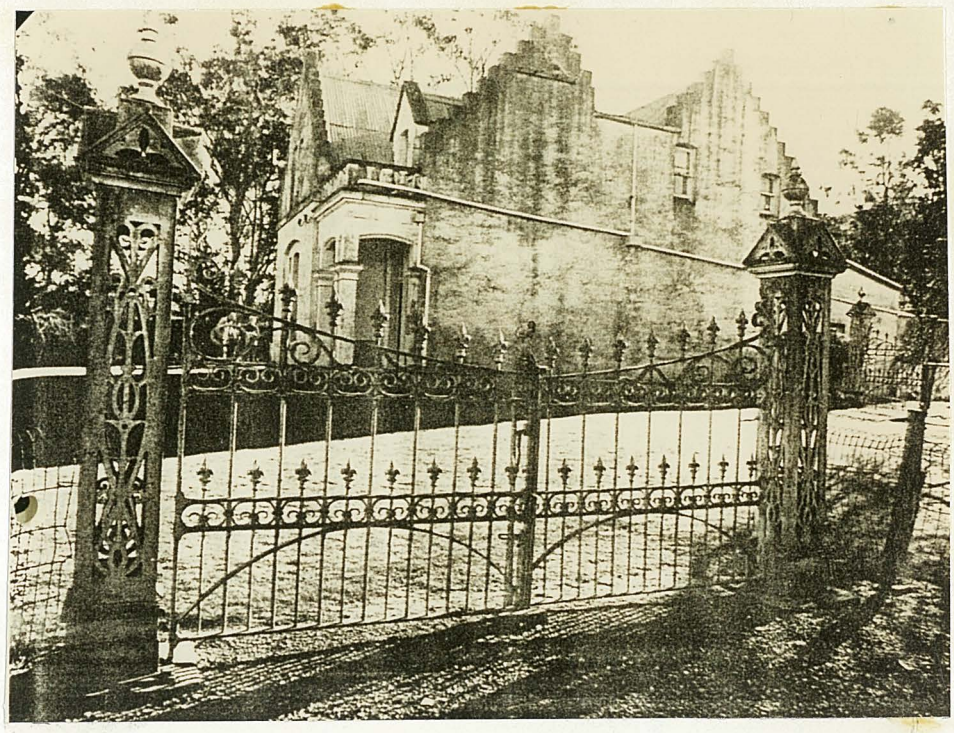


FIG. 26. 'BROOKLANDS', GOODWOOD, OTAGO, BY R.A. LAWSON

FIG. 27. BANK OF OTAGO, OAMARU, BY R.A. LAWSON

FIG. 28. UNION BANK, DUNEDIN, BY R.A. LAWSON

FIG. 29. BANK OF NEW SOUTH WALES, OAMARU, BY R.A. LAWSON

DUNEDIN TOWN HALL BY R.A. LAWSON
FIG. 30.

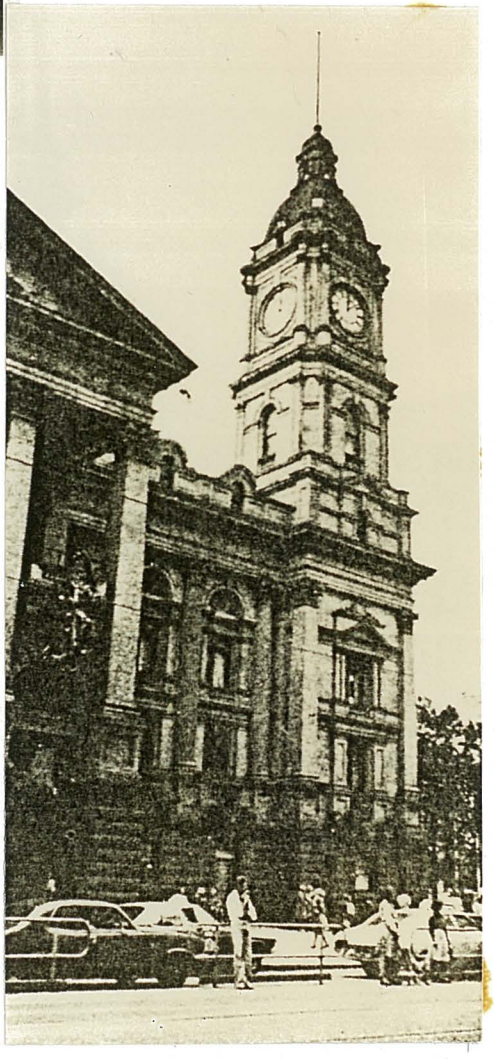


FIG. 31. MELBOURNE
TOWN HALL
BY REED AND BARNES

FIG. 32.
SOUTH MELBOURNE
TOWN HALL
BY CHARLES WEBB

FIG. 33. DUNEDIN
CIVIC CHAMBERS
RESTORED 1990

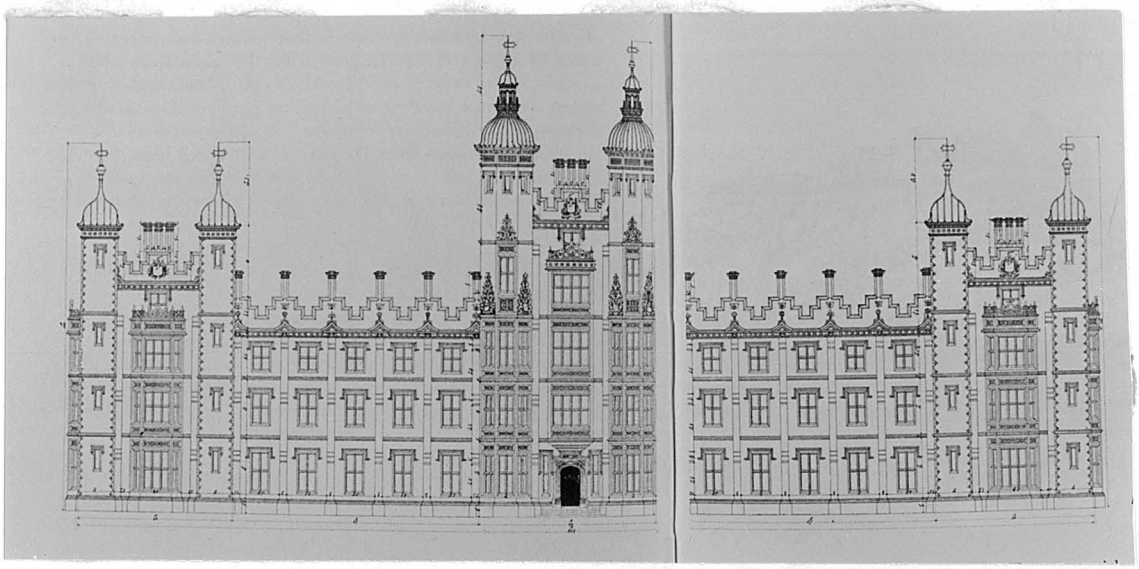


FIG. 34. DONALDSON'S HOSPITAL, EDINBURGH, BY W. H. PLAYFAIR

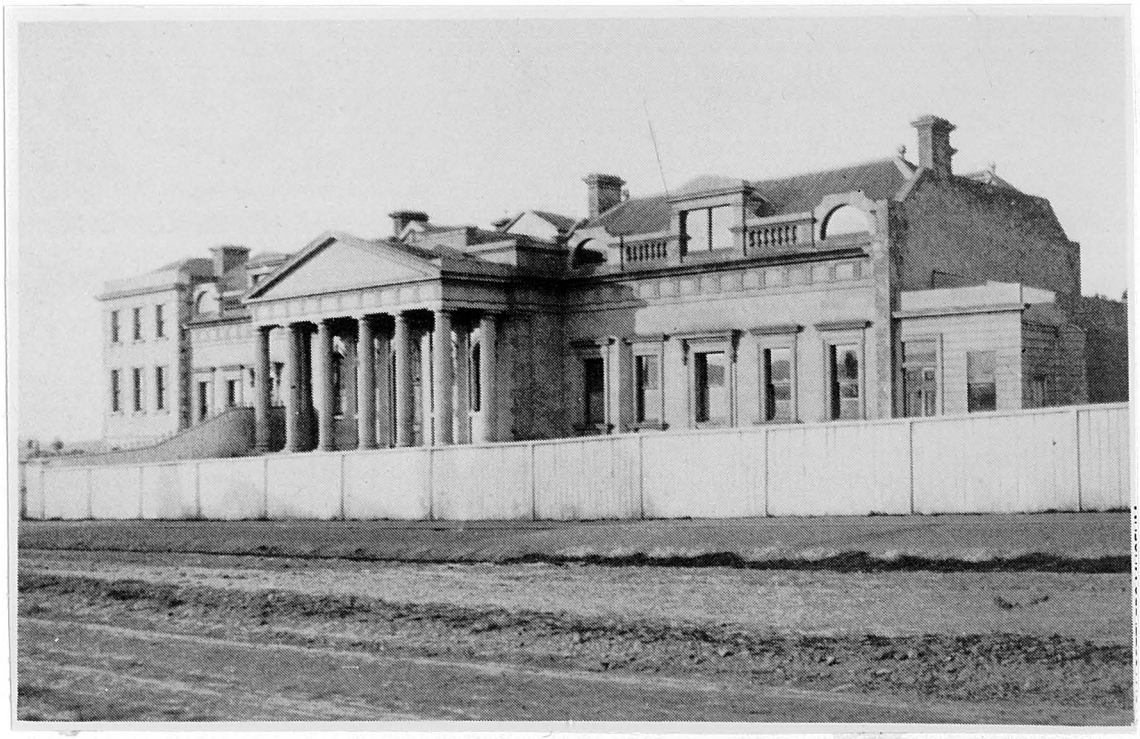


FIG. 35. OTAGO BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL, 1863

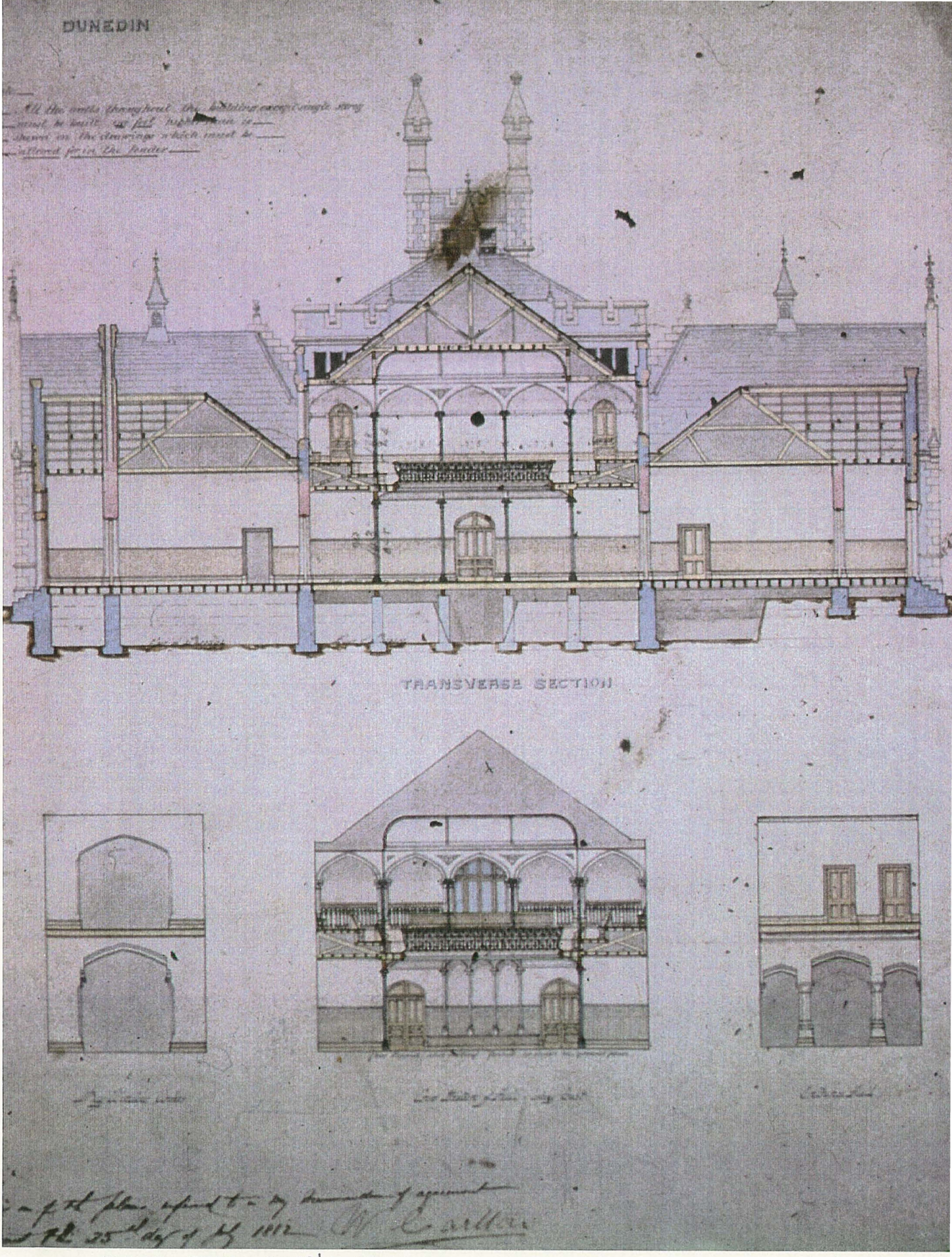


FIG. 37. OTAGO BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL, SECTION, BY R.A. LAWSON

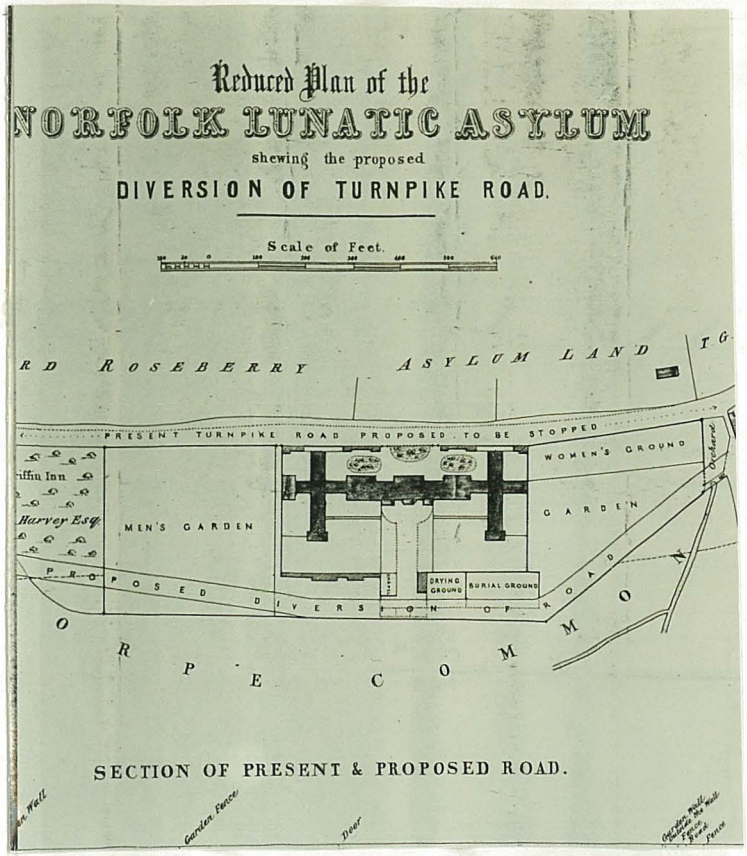


FIG. 38. NORFOLK LUNATIC ASYLUM SITE PLAN

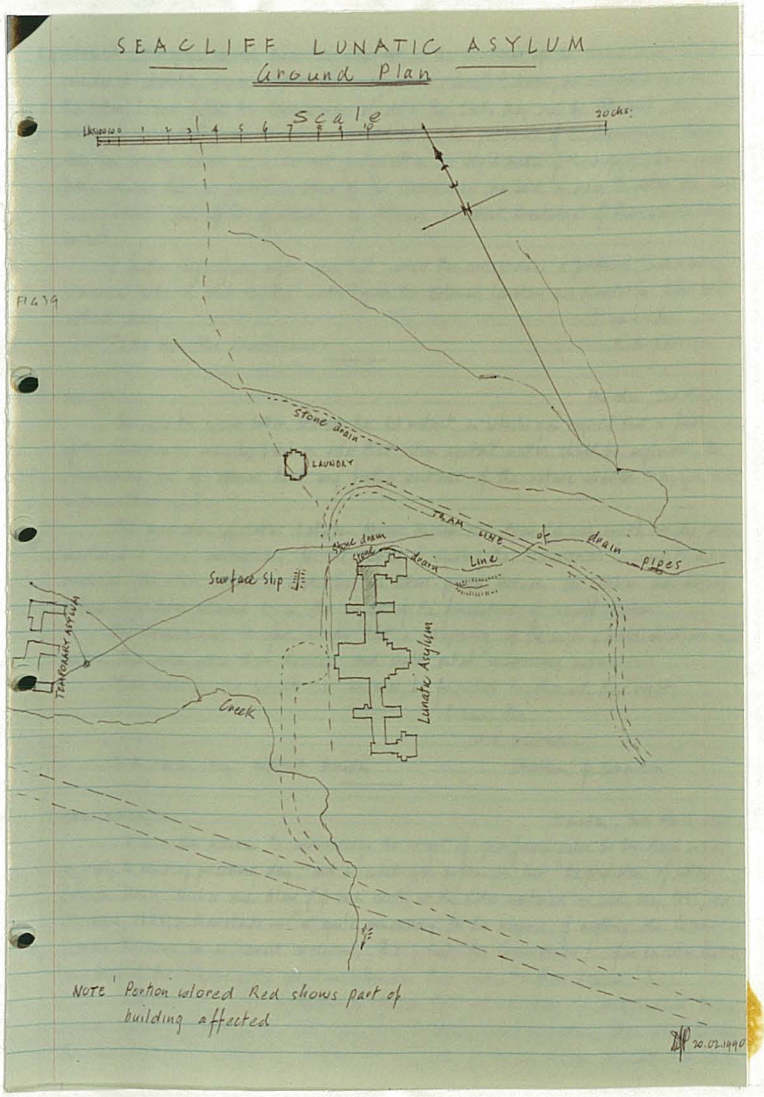


FIG. 39. SEACLIFF LUNATIC ASYLUM SITE PLAN BY R.A. LAWSON

FIG. 40. ROYAL INFIRMARY, EDINBURGH, BY DAVID BRYCE

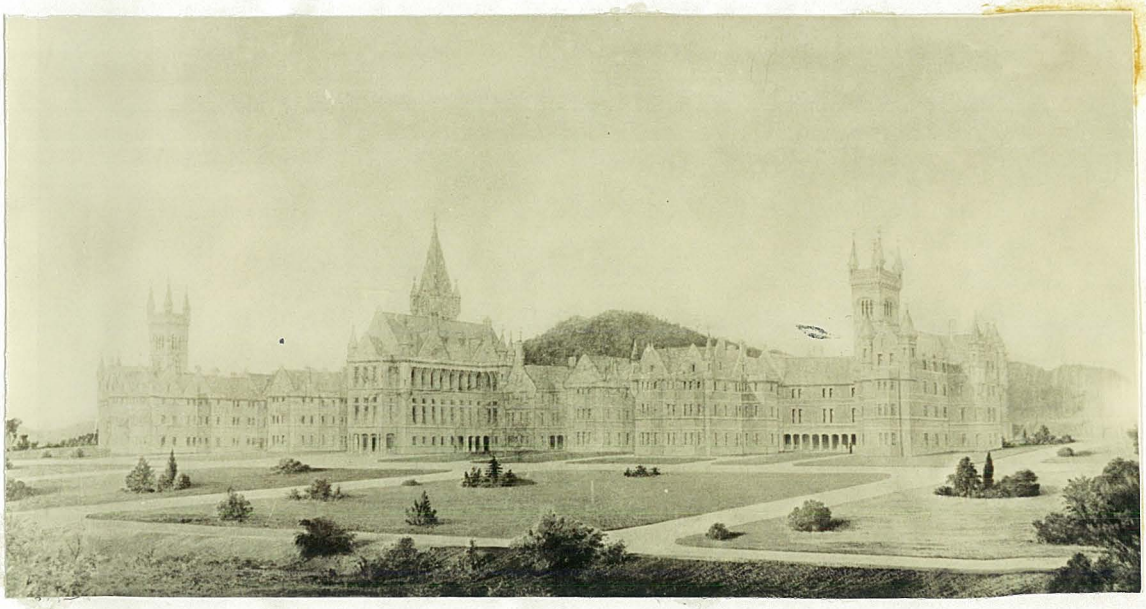
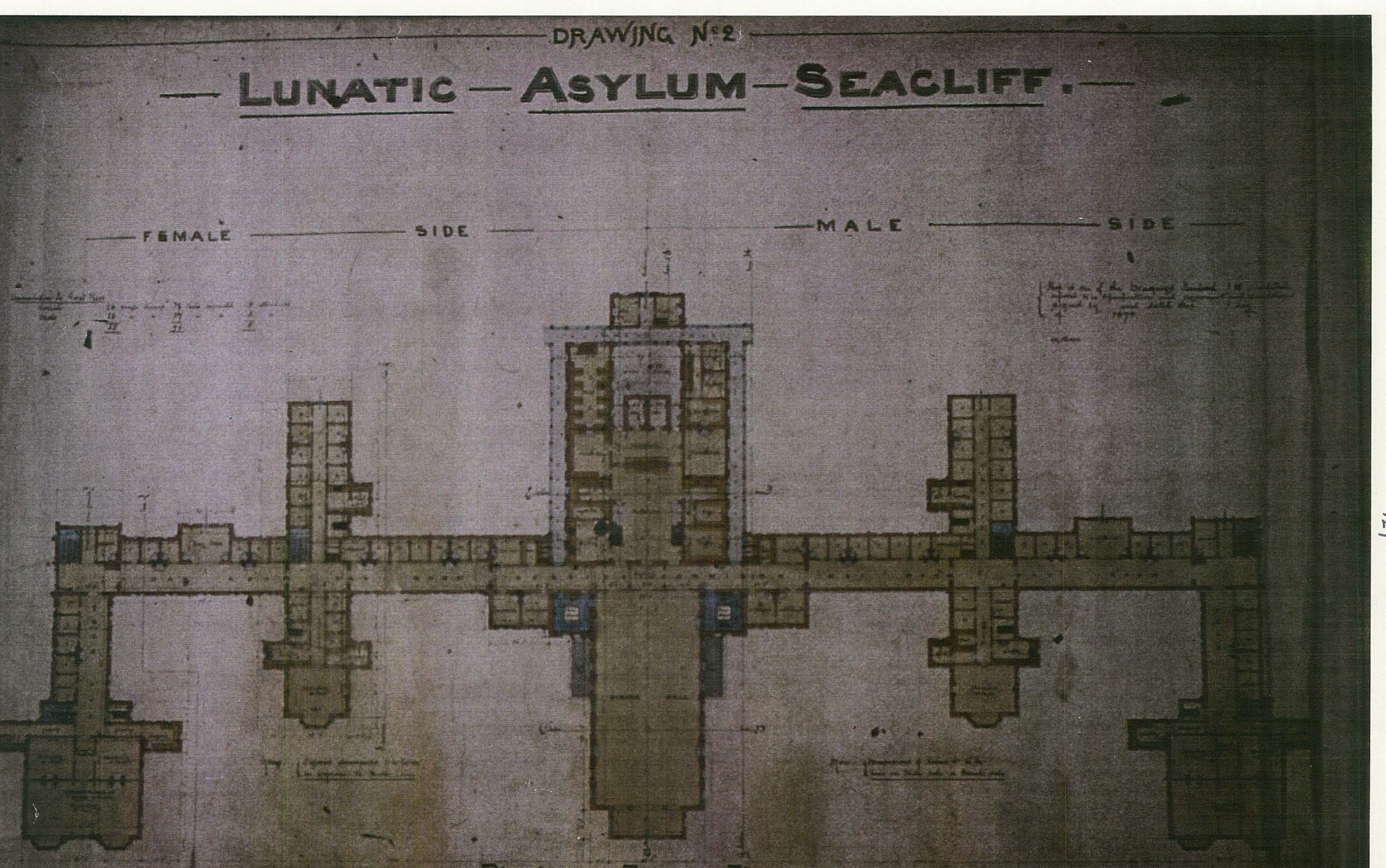


FIG. 41. SEACLIFF HOSPITAL, O'BRIEN PERSPECTIVE

DRAWING No 2

LUNATIC ASYLUM SEACLIFF.

FEMALE SIDE MALE SIDE



PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR

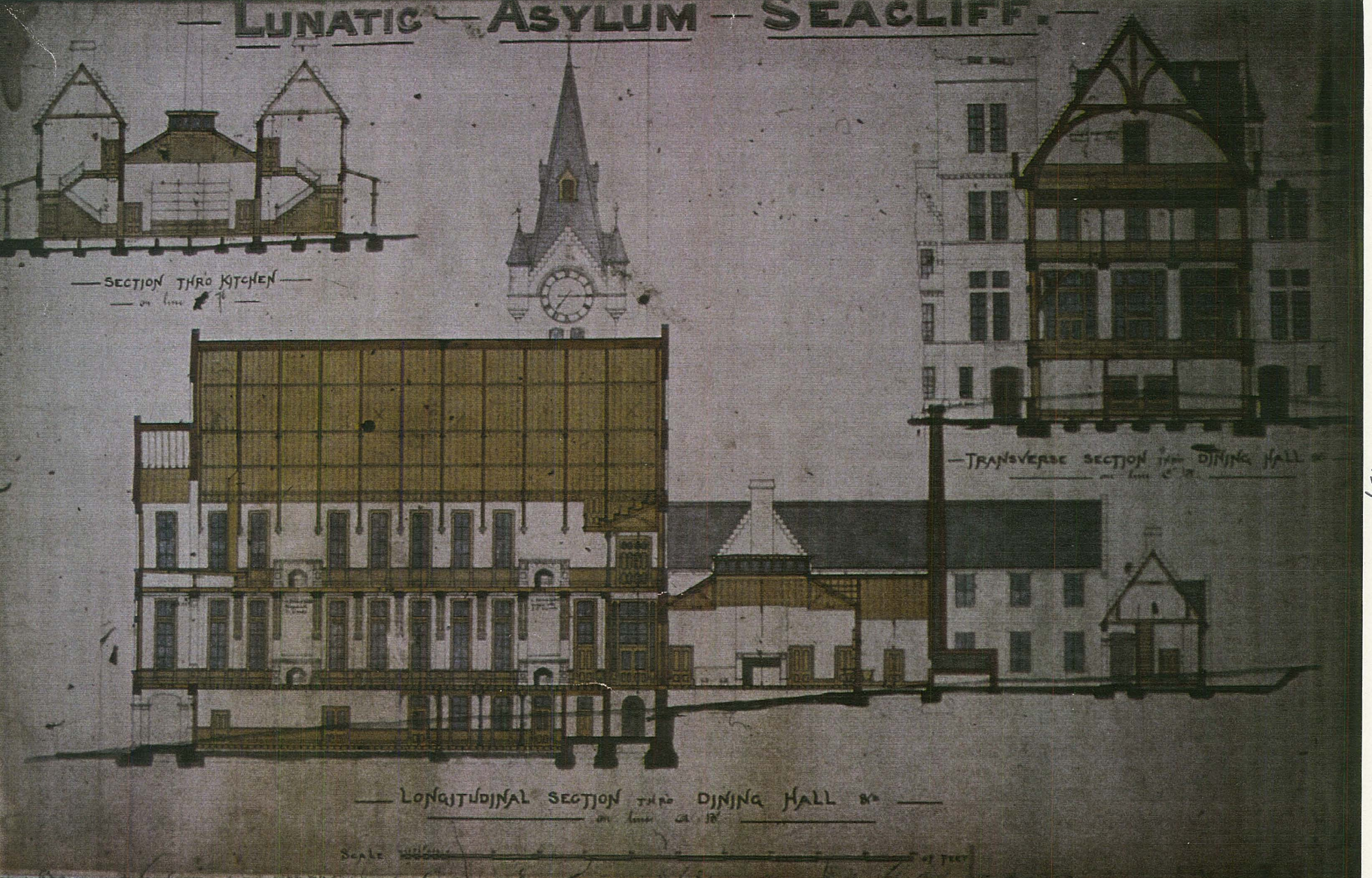
SCALE 1/8" = 1 FOOT

— LUNATIC — ASYLUM — SEACLIFF. —

— FRONT —

— ELEVATION —

LUNATIC ASYLUM SEACLIFF.



SECTION THRO KITCHEN
on line of

TRANSVERSE SECTION THRO DINING HALL
on line of

LONGITUDINAL SECTION THRO DINING HALL &c
on line of

Scale of Feet

FIG. 45. LOWTHER HALL,
ESSENDON
BY LAWSON AND GREY